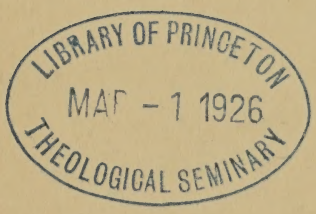
WINNING THE CHILDREN FOR CHRIST

Edited by

D. P. THOMSON, M. A.



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Winning the children for
Christ

Handbooks of Modern Evangelism

WINNING THE CHILDREN FOR CHRIST

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EDITED BY

D. P. THOMSON, M.A.

Editor of "The Modern Evangelistic Address," "Evangelism in the Modern World," "Twenty Sermons by Famous Scotch Preachers," "The Scottish Pulpit," etc.

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WINNING THE CHILDREN FOR CHRIST
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PREFACE

In a series of Handbooks of Modern Evangelism it is surely eminently fitting that one volume should be devoted to work among the children. No field of evangelistic endeavour requires to be more carefully and thoroughly explored than that afforded by the boys and girls growing up in our homes and Sunday Schools. They are in every sense the hope of the future, and from their ranks not only the pioneers of the Kingdom of God in the coming days, but the membership of the Church in the next generation must be supplied. The interest likely to be taken in a volume of this nature is enhanced by the fact that it appears just at the time when the great World Sunday School Convention is meeting in Glasgow, and when attention in this country is focussed to an unusual degree on the all important work of *Winning the Children for Christ.*

The present volume is the third of the series, and will be followed in due course by others on *The Modern Evangelistic Address; Present-day Methods in Evangelism; The Psychology of Evangelism,* and *The Ministry of Personal Dealing.* As in the previous volumes the Editor has sought to allow for the utmost catholicity of outlook and variety of expression consistent with the unity and scope of the subject. Thanks are due to Rev. Carey Bonner (who had himself hoped to contribute a chapter) and to Messrs. James Kelly and

Ernest H. Hayes for valuable help and suggestions. We would gratefully record our indebtedness to these and other friends for the assistance they have rendered.

D. P. T.

GLASGOW.

INTRODUCTION

EVANGELISM finds its finest and most fruitful field among the young life of the world, and the readiest and most eager response to the appeal of Jesus will ever be made by those who stand on the threshold of Life. For them the great adventure is only just beginning and the unknown future is full of dimly-realised possibilities. As the powers of mind and body expand, and the prospect of life in all its many-sidedness begins to unfold, there comes home to the hearts a sense of longing, and a consciousness of need, that give the evangelist his unique opportunity of presenting Christ as the Lord of Life, Who alone can satisfy its deepest needs and fulfil its loftiest ambitions, Who is worthy of all the passionate devotion and loyalty of youth and Who will prove adequate to every demand it may make.

The results of modern psychological research have been assimilated and applied with such eagerness and wholeheartedness by Christian thinkers and workers, that we are in little danger to-day of under-estimating either the peculiar problems of the adolescent period, or the unique opportunities it presents for effecting far-reaching decisions in the sphere of character and motive, and for the definite organisation of life round a distinctively Christian centre. The winning of the adolescent to a vital Christian discipleship is the avowed

aim of a multitude of organisations that have grown up under the shadow of the Church within the past generation. What is not so generally recognised—and is in fact doubted if not denied by many—is that boys and girls can be won for Jesus Christ before the great psychological and physiological changes that mark the adolescent period have really made themselves felt. This volume is based on the conviction that the vital work of winning the young for Christ cannot safely be left till the storm and stress of the adolescent period have commenced, and that children of tenderer years can be led into a very real experience of the love and power of Christ. It may be well to state some of the premises on which this conviction rests.

It is our belief that even children born in a Christian country, brought up in a Christian Church, and surrounded by all the gracious influences of a Christian home, *need* to be won for Jesus Christ—that only by a conscious and voluntary choice of their own wills can they enter into the full enjoyment of fellowship and service in the redeemed family of God. To say that such a child needs to be won for Christ is not to gainsay the value of a spiritual heritage and a Christian upbringing, nor is it to deny the fact that boys and girls born into a redeemed world, and consecrated to God at birth by believing parents, enjoy unique privileges and opportunities. It is simply to recognise the right of every individual to exercise his powers of judgment, and to determine the bent of his own character. It is to do no more than justice to that power of self-determination which the soundest philosophy will not allow us to abandon, and which the most scientific

psychology is forced to recognise. It is to take account of what is only too patent to even the casual observer—the utter spiritual indifference, the abject moral failure, and open and unashamed vice, of many who enjoyed in childhood's years all the privileges of Christian nurture and upbringing. It is to plead for the child's right of determining his own relationship to Christ when he comes to the age of responsibility, and of entering into the conscious enjoyment of his Divine inheritance by the exercise of his own will. It is to concede his equal right to reject the gift of God's love and refuse His proferred grace, if he so determine.

The writer further cherishes the conviction that boys and girls *can* be won for Christ in childhood, not merely that they can be prepared for intelligent and wholehearted decision during the later adolescent period. In the later pages of this book evidence will be adduced to show that children under fourteen years of age can, and do, enter into a very real experience of the presence and power of Christ, and give evidence of just as genuine and wholehearted a discipleship as many in later life. Even the child of comparatively tender years is capable of appreciating, in a childlike, but very real and exceedingly effective way, something of the beauty and moral value of the kind of life Jesus lived, and of choosing by an act of will to serve and follow Him. And children still younger than this can, and do, learn to love the Saviour with all the affection commonly bestowed on a mother or father. It is surely better that, before the stormy adolescent period comes, the young life should be firmly anchored in Christ and committed to His care, than that the frail barque should be thrust

out on those troubled waters without the firm hand of the Heavenly Pilot on the helm, and the inspiring leadership of the Great Captain to ensure success in life's great adventure. Children have their burdens and sorrows—often very real and very great—and they need a Saviour to share them. They have their hours of loneliness and fear, and they need a Friend to help them. They have their fight with temptation and sin, and only in His strength can they conquer. They often lose father or mother, or both, before their journey is well begun, and they need the comfort of a Heavenly Father's love and the consciousness of a Heavenly Father's presence. Further, it must be remembered that the majority of the human race die in childhood. Of the salvation of those who pass away in infancy few to-day have any doubt, but what of those who have come to an age of responsibility—for whom the moral choice has become a reality? Do we not do them a grave wrong if, for the brief years of their earthly pilgrimage and the dark hours of their last journey, we deprive them of the joy and comfort of conscious and happy fellowship with Christ, and eager and child-like service for Him? Let not the memory of forced and unnatural pre-adolescent religious experience blind us to the opportunity—nay, to the necessity—of winning to Christ the boys and girls of tender years. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

A resolute attempt must be made to win the children of our land for Christ. The best brains in our Churches must be given to this task, the most devoted

and enlightened service must be directed to that goal. The Church must realise as never before that she is pledged to the winning of the children for Christ. It has been well said that—"Only by winning the young can the Kingdom be won; only by saving the children can the Church itself be saved." It was the considered verdict of Dr. John Clifford, the great Free Church leader, that the Churches "must arrange their whole worship and work, their teaching and preaching, their fellowship and ministry, to win and hold in allegiance to Jesus the child and the adolescent." It is, as Lionel B. Fletcher remarked, a great thing to have the testimony of a dozen men of 60 redeemed from a life of sin and shame, and rejoicing in the Saviour's power, but it is a far, far greater thing to get a dozen boys of 12 into real living touch with Christ. The testimony of the former is to the power of Christ to save from the worst; the lives of the latter will witness through the years to the power of the same Saviour to keep from sin. No generation can afford to forget the dictum of Henry Drummond, that Christianity is not simply a religion for rebuilding human ruins, but even more emphatically and essentially a religion for preventing men and women from ever becoming ruins. If that prevention is to be effective it must be ensured in childhood years. The law books of to-day are full of statistics of juvenile crime—of Court cases in which children of 11 and 12 years are the offenders. The psychologists have been forced to the conviction that the really formative years belong to the preadolescent period and the Church of Jesus

Christ can no longer afford to remain blind to the opportunities it is losing if it fails to reach out after the child and does not seek to win him for Christ.

Modern Surgery, we are told, "has proved the value of caring for child life in the tenderest years, when deformities and perversions can often be permanently set right, and abnormal developments brought back to normal." Modern Education is pushing back its activities to an earlier age and stage in each generation, and is even invading the home so that the environmental influences may be studied. Modern Evangelism cannot afford to lag behind here. If the spiritual side of the child be neglected during these years an opportunity is lost which will never come again, and incalculable injury may be done to the growing life.

The first and greatest responsibility for the winning of the children to Christ rests with the parents. It is at once the duty and privilege of Christian fathers and mothers to bring their boys and girls into happy and wholehearted Christian discipleship, to awaken in their young hearts a love for the Saviour that will deepen and strengthen with the passing of the years. Few parents, alas, realise this, and comparatively few children have the joy of a truly Christian upbringing. Parents whose anxiety for their children's welfare leads them to lay good foundations for everything else, never seem to realise the necessity for laying the foundations of the spiritual life in early years, or, if they do realise it, they display a strange reluctance to undertake the task themselves and betray a surprising willingness to relegate this duty to the Sunday School teacher or the

minister. Christian parents who so shirk that responsibility and forfeit their privilege, lose one of the rarest joys of life and store up for themselves a possible harvest of misunderstanding and resentment. The sweetest and most natural spiritual experiences of children are those induced by a parent's loving heart and words, by the beauty of a father's life, or the Christ-likeness of a mother's love, and the happiest and most truly Christian homes are those where the boys and girls are fitted within the sacred circle of the earthly family to enter the larger fellowship of the Father's Home.

Next to the parent the Sunday School teacher has the best opportunity of leading the child to Christ. Thousands of children in our Sunday School come from utterly unchristian homes—hundreds come from Christian homes where parents fail in their obligation and forfeit their right of winning the young lives for Christ themselves. Here, then, is the unique opportunity of the Sunday School teacher—here his greatest joy is to be found. No one outside the circle of the home is brought into more intimate or happy relations with the child. No one so wins his love and affection; and no one can so easily and naturally lead him to the Saviour. It is the function of the Sunday School—and ought to be its clearly recognised and defined aim—not merely to lay the groundwork of a thorough Christian education and introduce the young mind to the world of spiritual reality, but "to bring every pupil to realise a personal relationship to Jesus Christ, a personal responsibility for active membership in the Church,

and a personal obligation to advance the Redeemer's Kingdom by diligent and consecrated effort." Anything short of that is failure.

Readers will gather from a study of the contents of this book that the editors allow *a place for the Children's Evangelist—for the specialist, in making the appeal of Jesus Christ to boys and girls outside the ordinary work of the Sunday School.* The reasons for that position are set forth in the concluding chapters of the volume. The need for a more educational type of evangelism is, we feel, balanced by the need for a more definitely evangelistic type of religious education. The one is as great a *desideratum* and as urgent a need as the other.

It is our conviction that effective educational and evangelistic work in this field can only be done by those who are prepared to keep abreast of the splendid research work being done in the field of Child Psychology, and that conviction has determined the plan of this book. Its basis is at once psychological and historical—it rests equally on a child's idea of the child himself, and on the attitude of Christ and His Church to him. It seeks to relate the fruits of scientific research on the one hand, and practical experience on the other, to the religious development of childhood and to the problem of child conversion. It strives to afford some guidance to the Sunday School teacher in the realisation of his more definitely evangelistic aims, and makes some attempt to deal with the vexed question of evangelistic meetings for children and to indicate the nature and scope of the fruits of work aimed at—*Winning the Children for Christ.*

We are keenly aware of the defects of the book, as well as of the questions unanswered in these pages, and of the difficulties for which no solution is offered, but we believe that it represents a useful attempt to grapple with one of the most vital questions of the hour, and we dare to hope that something of real suggestiveness and practical value will be found in its pages.

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WINNING THE CHILDREN FOR CHRIST

Chapter I

THE MIND OF THE CHILD

GEORGE H. GREEN, B.Litt., B.Sc.

The fact which we tend to emphasise to-day, perhaps more than at any other time in history, in connection with the mind of the child, is the fact of development. The mind of the child, that is to say, has not merely to grow in order to resemble the mind of the adult; but has to pass through a whole series of changes.

The difference between mere growth and development may perhaps be illustrated by reference to a single point which is of great importance to those who deal in any way with children. It is still considered by many people that if a matter be expressed in simple words which the child is in the habit of using, the matter becomes clear to the child. This is no doubt partly true. But we are inclined to forget that the simplest words have not the same meaning for the child that they possess for the adult, and that they cannot possibly possess such meaning until the child has passed through a number of experiences which can come to him only with the passing of time. This is true even of such words as "father," "home," "money," or "food." Whenever we say that something "means more" to us than it does to others, we imply that we have passed through experiences which these others have not undergone, and that we are, in certain directions, more developed than they.

Work with children, therefore, whatever may be its character, depends for its success upon the understanding and adoption of, not merely the child's vocabulary, but the child's point of view.

The point of view depends upon experience, and this again upon the surroundings in which the child finds himself. Such simple words as those already referred to possess quite different meanings for the child who lives in a mansion and the one who is brought up in a slum. A lesson or a talk about home, given simultaneously to two children so differently reared, would produce quite different results, since what is conveyed to each child depends for its effect upon the already existing meaning of the terms employed. Obvious as this is when stated, it is in practice often ignored.

When we speak of the child's environment, however, we must not think of a big and complex world which surrounds the child, and in respect of which he is passive. Even the environment of the adult is not of this character. We do not know, we do not even attend to all that surrounds us. To some of our surroundings we react a great deal; to others much less. Much that is about us we completely ignore. We speak of great or little interest, or of indifference.

The direction of interest changes a great deal at different periods of life. For example, there is a time in a boy's life when he is quite indifferent to girls; and another in which he is intensely interested in them. There are periods in which girls are more deeply interested in their dress and personal appearance than at others.

It may be well, in discussing the mind of the child, to consider it from the point of view of interest, since it is to existing interests that all who attempt to win the child in any way whatsoever must appeal. We may regard development as implying, in the main, that at different periods of life different interests predominate, so that what will stir the child profoundly at one period will move him but little in another.

The study of the interests of men and women has given rise to the conception of instincts, some of which we find operating soon after birth, whilst others come into prominence at later stages of life. An instinct implies interest in a certain object or class of objects, a certain kind of behaviour independent of learning or experience towards such objects and the experiencing of feeling of a certain kind as such behaviour continues satisfactorily towards its end. Thus, in connection with the instinct of hunger, food is the appropriate object—in the human infant, the mother's breast—and sucking the natural activity. As the action goes on, the unpleasant craving is replaced by pleasurable feelings, and ultimately by the feeling of satisfaction.

There is no general agreement amongst psychologists as to the number of instincts, or as to the way in which we are to classify them. We may, however, easily recognise hunger, sex, flight, curiosity and self-assertion.

In the first three years of life the hunger instinct is the most important which comes into play. At first, there are no interests at all outside of food, and the baby who is not feeding sleeps.

But we may see, even so early as this, the operation

of the combative instinct. We have but to attempt to separate the baby from the breast or the bottle, and we shall witness struggles to push away the obstacles we interpose and to regain the desired object.

Our instincts make their presence known to us as impulses from within. The child *wants* to feed, and *knows* how to feed, long before he knows why he must feed, and this state of things is essential to his life. Experience teaches him a great deal and enables him in the end to know something of feeding, so that he is able to learn that some kinds of food suit him, some disagree with him, that some he likes and some he dislikes. He learns to control feeding and to reduce it to habit and routine.

The study of the hunger instinct is very illuminating in respect of the light thrown by it upon the process of transformation of instinctive activities into adult conduct. The object of interest is food. But since food becomes associated with pleasant flavours, with cutlery, glass and napery, with congenial company and good conversation, some part of the interest, and often the greater part, is transferred to these. A man may in time prefer remaining hungry to dining alone, or to dining in discomfort. Or again, certain experiences may have taught the value of food; as the man in a desert land learns that he must spare no effort, if he values his life, to push on to the lands where food is to be discovered. It was because he was speaking to an audience for whom food had acquired a definite meaning that Christ was able to refer to "they who hunger and thirst after righteousness," and to be certain of being understood by them in a way that would have

been impossible to people who had never experienced intense hunger and thirst, or known the need of intense effort if starvation were to be evaded. In a land where food was scarce and hard to come by, the phrase "Man shall not live by bread alone" possessed an intenser meaning than is possible of realisation by the bulk of men and women in Great Britain to-day.

It is true that we make little attempt to appeal to the child of under three years of age through the medium of words, but it is not to be imagined on this account that the period is of little importance. It is, on the other hand, perhaps the most important period of the child's life, since he is laying the foundations of all his future conceptions of love and duty, with which his whole moral and religious development will be intimately concerned. Broadly speaking, his mother represents love and his father duty—but this distinction must not be pressed too far. In this period, too, the child learns something of acting or refraining from action for reasons connected with other people. If he acts in certain ways he will be praised by people whom he has learned to love; if he refuses to act in these ways he will be punished—the form of the punishment and its relation to the offence depending upon the father and mother. The demands we make upon the child of three are few, and the punishments and rewards he receives are very insignificant in our eyes. But they are none the less important for him.

Perhaps the first signs we discover that the child is developing are those which indicate that he is "taking notice" of things. These tell us that the satisfaction of hunger does not now absorb the whole of his waking

interest. By the time that he is three years of age, the hunger instinct has been developed beyond the instinctive stage. The child knows how and when and what to eat. He has formed reasonably regular habits of sleeping. The greater part of his interest is free to be directed elsewhere.

It seems now to be directed upon himself, and he enters upon a stage of development which we can speak of as purely selfish. It is folly to deplore this, and more than folly to seek to make it otherwise. St. Paul does not advise us to expect from a child other than childish things. We may deplore the concentration of interest upon the self in the adult, who should have passed through and beyond this stage, but not in the child, who learns as he passes through it to know himself. Excessive praise just now may lead to grandiose ideas about himself. Indifference and neglect may lead him to underestimate himself. In either of these ways we may lay the foundations of excessive self-consciousness, the personal deficiency which troubles so many men and women in later life, making some arrogant because they believe themselves to be inferior people, who must demonstrate their superiority by disproportionate efforts; and others shy and diffident, because they feel that they cannot demonstrate by any efforts they make the superiority which they believe themselves (perhaps unwittingly) to possess.

It is at this stage that the child shows a great interest in the toy, the plaything; and it is his interest which makes the toy so worth while to him. But the ball he strikes and pursues, the little cart he pulls, the toy train he directs, are all of them objects through

which he learns something of his increasing powers. Simply and naturally he boasts of what he is able to do with the toys, and of their possession. He speaks of "*my* toys." He invites favoured adults to "see how far *I* can throw *my* ball."

It is in this period, then, that the child acquires an interest in those things which a human being is able to do and to know; and this because he has set his mind on being able to do and to know all these things *himself*. A frequent form of question is "When I am grown up like you, shall I be able to drive a motor-car?" Consequently, it is not surprising that, in the earliest phases of this period, the father is admired as a person who knows everything and is able to do everything. He is admired, and he is imitated. The imitation is in the main confined to superficial matters, since the child's powers of analysis are very limited. The father's hat and coat may be borrowed, his mannerisms of speech and gesture more or less accurately copied. Fathers who leave pipes about will find at some time or other one of their children diligently sucking at the stem of an unlighted pipe, endeavouring to appreciate the experience of being grown up.

Any effort we make, therefore, to attract the child's interest at this stage must be conditioned by the fact that his interest already centres about himself. He wants to know something of his own origin, of his own past and future . . . of the things that he will be able to do in the days when he shall be grown up. Other children interest him in the main because they are like himself. Though we speak of other children as his friends, we must bear in mind constantly that the child

has not the capacity for friendship as the adult understands it. His friends are the people who give him various things, who assist him in various ways, who pay attention to him, who are willing to watch him perform the feats of which he is proud, to play with him under his direction. In the earlier phases of the stage of development of which we are speaking, the child invents an "Imaginary Companion," or even a number of such, to whom he talks and with whom he plays. Any study of the imaginary companion reveals that it is in the main composed of wishes for himself which the child cannot realise fully in the real world. The companion does not express merely a wish for companionship on the part of the child, but wishes for a companion of a particular kind; one who is willing to admire, to assist. Only rarely could a real child take the place of the imaginary companion.*

The child has a background of experience which enables the story of the contrasted attitude of some of the disciples and that of Jesus Himself to be at once appreciated. Every child has met with people who cannot be bothered with him, who wish him to be seen and not heard, who tell him to go away somewhere where he will be able to play without disturbing people. And he has generally met a few people who seem never too busy to attend to him, to see the things he brings to show them, and to listen to what he has to say. His deep interest in himself has led him to feel keenly about these different types of people, so that he dislikes the

* The imaginary companion is discussed in the following books. Green—Psycho-analysis in the Classroom, and Green—The Day-dream: A study in Development.

former as strongly as he likes the latter. His interest and his experience, then, at this stage, enable him very definitely to group Jesus with the people he likes. The few episodes of the boyhood of Jesus, or stories of Jesus as a man, actually performing deeds which the child wishes to perform, make their appeal on the same grounds.

It has, in the past, been customary to tell these narratives, and then to endeavour to impress a moral. The method does not take into account the mind of the child, but is based entirely upon conceptions of the adult mind. If we are to win the child, we must take into account his interests and his stage of development, as they are, not as we might foolishly wish them to be. We shall choose our occasions. We shall not, at a moment when the child has been punished for some childish fault, and is full of rebellious feelings, talk to him of the restriction of the love of Jesus to the good child . . . committing an error which is committed daily by many who deal with children. But occasions may be chosen, and stories may be presented in such a way that the child makes for himself the discovery—"Then He was just like me." Or he says—"I want to be like that." Such a discovery, or such a formulation of an aim, has a far greater value when it is made by the child himself, than when we make it for him. It has the further value for ourselves that it ensures us that we have succeeded in our aim. The man who talks to passive children never knows how much attention he is receiving from them, the extent to which he is understood, or the results of his teaching.

A great deal has been written of the child's imitative

tendencies at this age. The child who discovers that the people he loves maintain an attitude of reverence towards certain objects, practise certain forms of devotion and follow certain habits of worship, is constantly stimulated to imitate at least the outward forms of acts that are religious in character. In this matter, he is best left to himself; being neither unduly stimulated or discouraged. Such imitation should be taken for granted. Often, however, people are inclined to imagine that these imitated actions imply more than they actually mean. It is wisest to regard them as expressions, not of the wish to worship, but of the wish to be in all respects like the people whom the child loves and admires. They are not religious, in all probability, but are of a piece with the child's other actions in which he tries to copy adult behaviour. But they are of value in that they have directed his attention to certain acts, whose significance he will come gradually to know. In proportion as these acts come to possess meaning, they will become religious to an increasing degree.

It is of the very greatest importance that such imitation shall not be made a subject of remark. Extravagant praise, unrestrained expressions of pleasure by adults who entirely misunderstand what it is that the child means by such actions, lead to a complete misapprehension on the part of the child of what it is that is admired and praised. He comes to believe—as apparently many of the Pharisees believed—that religion is nothing more than the performance of certain actions in order to gain the praise of other people, and in particular, of those people who are placed in positions of authority. The child who merely imitates older

people has often enough been taken for a religious prodigy; the result being the later disillusionment of the people who unwisely hoped for so much from the child, and permanent injury to his own religious development.

Closely bound up with this matter of imitation is the whole question of suggestibility. All of us, children and adult alike, are suggestible in some measure. Children are, however, in general more suggestible than adults. To say that a person is suggestible means that he is likely to accept uncritically and to act upon conclusions which are supplied to him by others, expressed in their speech or implied in their actions. The fact that a number of people whom he loves or admires prepare to go to church on Sunday morning suggests to the child that he would like to go also. The sight of a crowd of people waiting to enter a building makes him wish to enter it.

Suggestions depend for their effect upon the source from which they come to us. They depend upon our attitude towards this source. If suggestions are made by people who enjoy our confidence, whom we love or esteem or admire, they are more likely to be accepted uncritically than when they come from people who repel us or to whom we are hostile. For most people, too, suggestions are more effective when they are repeated, or when they come from a large number of people. When the suggestion is made by many people we speak of it as a massive suggestion. When it is made by some one who is admired or loved we speak of it as depending upon the prestige of the person making it.

The child's endeavour to reproduce religious behaviour depends in part upon the number of people who

surround him who act in these particular ways. Their actions go to make up a mass suggestion. Then again, these people possess prestige in the child's eyes. The suggestions which come from the family and the home are therefore very strong ones; possessing a double character which makes them more than ordinarily effective.

The question of prestige leads rapidly to the conclusion that before we can hope to win a child for any cause we have at heart we must first win him ourselves. We cannot win him by threats, or by making him afraid. Nor can we merely win him by telling ourselves that we love him. Time spent in playing with a child, in helping him in those directions in which he wishes for assistance, in endeavouring to understand a point of view, is not wasted; indeed, it is essential that time should be so spent. Many adults who know that it is essential to woo a woman if she is to be won never realise that it is as essential to woo a child as a preliminary to winning it.

This does not in the least imply that an adult is to play at being a child. A man does not woo or win a woman by pretending to be a woman. Manliness in this instance serves him better than any pretence of femininity. The adult who wins the child does so by remaining an adult; but he endeavours to understand the child. He wishes strongly to know his point of view and the direction of his interests. For the childish adult the child has a great deal of contempt. The actions of people for whom the child has dislike or contempt act as counter-suggestions: the child receives them, perhaps not critically, but with marked disapproval, and

generally acts contrary to them. Hatred of religion is often directly traceable to the fact that religion was associated in early childhood with people who were strongly disliked.

We may perhaps contrast this period, in which the child is strongly ego-centred, with that which appears to follow, in which he shows a great deal of capacity for comradeship. From the tenth year to perhaps the fifteenth or the sixteenth he is very interested in companions and with tasks which may be carried out co-operatively. The difference between utilising others to carry out one's own plans and sharing with them in the performance of a course of action directed towards a common end is very great. It is in this stage that the child comes to understand the meaning of what we are accustomed to speak of as brotherhood.

Comradeship gives a richer and fuller meaning to the conception of love which the child has already gained as a result of his experience of the world and of others. In the first three years his love is almost purely animal, extending to those people upon whom he relies for food and comfort. Such "cupboard" love is not a high form of love, but it is the utmost of which the child is capable at this stage. From this he passes to a love which is still not a high form, but which is extended to those people who are, speaking generally, of use to him. But in this third stage we reach something that is far higher—love of the comrades whose play and tasks he shares. It is this particular development of interest that was realised by the founder of the Scout movement, the success of which is adequate testimony to the soundness of the psychological prin-

ciples on which it was based. The Scout and Guide movements do not call on boys and girls to sit passively and look and listen; but call on them to act together, since it is only in connected action that comradeship can be experienced and enjoyed.

The subsequent stage of development, which we know as adolescence, has been fully treated by a number of writers; notably by Stanley Hall. Typically it is a romantic period, in which youth dreams wonderful dreams. The concept of love is extended by the idea of devotion and sacrifice. The period is one of great and often lofty enthusiasms.

This very brief review of the development of the child from infancy to the early stages of manhood or womanhood will serve to make clear the fact of the difference between children who are living in different stages of development. It is quite true that the child is surrounded by precisely the same world as is the adult, but it is nevertheless not true to say that the child and the adult *live in the same world.* Each sees it differently, because the interest of each is differently directed. Each asks questions of it and about it, and the questions are entirely different. The question "Who made the world?" is a very different one from "Why is the world made so?" . . . just as "Who made me?" bespeaks a very different outlook from "Why was I ever born?" Both are expressions of curiosity, but curiosity directed through interest to entirely different aspects of existence.

We have already spoken of instincts, of spontaneous activities directed towards certain objects—of hunger and its connection with food, of fear and its connection

with big and overwhelming objects, of self-assertion and its association with objects that may be handled, of combativeness and its association with objects which obstruct other instinctive activities. During all the periods of development which we have discussed, we see these instincts undergoing modifications.

Our interest is transferred from the original objects to others. Or we learn something of the effects produced by our actions and so begin to act reasonably and intentionally, to modify our actions, and so to emancipate ourselves to some extent from our impulses. Or again, we learn something of the pleasure which we feel in connection with certain activities, and modify our activities in order to produce more pleasure for ourselves.

The view that has here been taken of development is that in any one of the several stages of development a single instinct is predominant in the life of the child; and that, in the course of development, this instinct becomes known through experience, through work and play, and becomes controlled. But at each stage interest is directed differently so that we may speak of the child's interest being directed successively towards food and people who are associated with his food; towards himself, his activities and people who are useful in connection with these; towards comrades and the excursions and activities shared with them and finally, towards a single companion with whom he contemplates sharing all his possessions, his thoughts, and to whom he proposes to devote all his achievements. People who have attempted to win children in the past have succeeded just so far as they have succeeded in

relating themselves and the things they love to these interests of the child.

The problem of winning a child is not the same as that of instructing him. More obviously than is the case with adults, the child's attitude towards things and people depends upon the way in which he feels about them. Adults have to force themselves in some measure to attend to things they do not like and to perform tasks which do not interest them. But even so, attention wanders, and the unloved task is set aside at the earliest possible moment. Thought is controlled by interest. The child who listens to the story of the Gadarene swine is likely at the end to ask what the owners of the pigs said when they were told of their loss, since he is much more interested in the question of possession, which immediately affects a child who frequently disputes with brothers and sisters the ownership of toys, than in any other which arises out of the narrative. But a story of Jesus which shows Him as engaged in the work of healing or preaching, of feeding multitudes of people, of wandering homeless and weary, of entering Jerusalem in triumph, will certainly fascinate the child, since all these things are of interest. In the child's thoughts, as he thinks the matter over, he puts himself in the place of Christ, and imagines himself acting in precisely this manner; since children invariably identify themselves with the heroes of their imaginings. It is important not to enter into long, unwanted explanations of stories at their close, nor to ask numerous questions to discover how much the child has been attending. If the child has been

attending at all, and if the story has in the least captured his imagination, he will ask questions about it, and will enter upon discussions. "But why did Christ allow the men to beat him?" is the sort of question that is at once asked, at the end of the narration of the events immediately prior to the crucifixion, and it tempts the adult to an explanation of the doctrine of the atonement, which the child will not in the least understand. The retort, "What would you have done?" will do a great deal more to maintain the interest that has evidently been aroused. The child replies with the statement, "I would have killed them:" or something very similar. "But why?" The child will volunteer a statement to the effect that such people should be punished, and at this point it is possible to tell him that Christ did not want them punished and to refer to the words . . . "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." We have led the child, through his own interests, and along the path of his own thoughts to a point at which Christ is presented to him in a fuller light than before. The child has already realised the possibility of loving those who are kind to him, and has been able to understand that Christ might well be expected to do so too. But we have helped him to realise that in this matter Christ goes beyond him, much as the people he admires go beyond him in other respects. And I believe that we have achieved this much more effectively than we could have done by means of an exposition following on the story. I well remember that when, as a boy, I used to read tracts and religious stories I always skipped the doctrinal perora-

tion. The few I read I have forgotten, though I remember in some detail a very large number of the stories.

The child's mind, like its body, develops through exercise. The child who merely listens is not mentally active in respect of what is told, but is generally day-dreaming in other directions. The person who can capture the child's attention, who can stir him to wonder, who can lead him to feel and think deeply and intensely, is a person who, because he loves the child and sympathises with him, is able to appeal directly to his interest and to lead it out beyond those things with which it is ordinarily occupied. I believe that in the past we have in general paid insufficient attention to the importance that feeling plays in the mental life of the child, and in particular to the importance of the feeling with which certain people and certain actions are invested as a result of the experiences of the early years of life; the feelings which are fundamental in connection with conceptions of love and duty. It is these feelings and their later development, which determine the subsequent attitude towards persons, and consequently affect very profoundly the problem of winning the child.

Chapter II

THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF LIFE

J. G. MACKENZIE, B.D.

"Adolescence," says Dr. McCurdy, "is the period during which people of either sex are apt to become keenly aware of their sexual and other problems. For this reason most patients date their 'nervousness' from this time; but any one who goes beneath the surface of such phenomena sees that adolescence is merely the time when the faulty preparation for life becomes dramatically evident, the causative factors lying far behind."

Dr. McCurdy is here thinking of neurotic patients suffering from one or other of the many nervous functional disorders, as Hysteria, Obsessions, Phobias, etc. But his dictum applies equally to those who have failed to win a moral or spiritual life. All neurotic trouble has its roots in some failure in psychological adjustment which in the great majority of cases goes back to early childhood. Adolescence is the time for religious and moral decisions, not because some wholly new factor is brought to bear on the growing young men and women but because at that period the early impressions, moral and spiritual, manifest their natural expression.

There is no greater fallacy about the formative years than that which holds the adolescent period to be the most important. Recent study has drawn de-

served attention to the earlier years, especially to those between three and ten. The study of the delinquent and unstable child in the psychological clinics, and the study of the abnormal adult by the psychotherapist show conclusively that the roots of abnormal behaviour must be traced to those early years. Dr. Pfister's recent work on "Love in Children" gives numerous examples of "Moral Disease" arising in the early repression or perversion of the instincts through the thwarting of the love sentiment.

All this is quite easily understood when one remembers that the instincts of the child are first in the field. Long before the child can rationally or morally judge an action the instinctive energies are finding outlet almost unimpeded at first. This brings pleasure and naturally the desire to repeat the experience. Habits are acquired and tendencies indulged which, to a child, have no moral content; but in later years these habits and tendencies may come under the ban of conscience or society. But this time they may have become "compulsive" and outside the control of the child's will. He lies, steals; indulges in perverted habits; and yet mourn over it as he will he cannot better himself. He may have little idea why he lies or steals; neither brings him any conscious good. He is suffering from "moral disease," and is unconsciously motived by some repressed emotion. When the adolescent gives way to evil habit it is because in the earlier years there has been faulty development.

The formative years, then, begin at the beginning. From the first the infant is active and not passive. Every mother and nurse knows how quickly an infant

learns that in response to its crying it gets lifted up, and made comfortable. Soon the child comes to cry when there is nothing wrong; it wants to get lifted up! Thus the child early begins associating its actions with their results. It is not meant that the babe has any clear ideas; but in some vague way it can associate crying and being lifted up.

The above is a simple illustration of one of the formative processes of behaviour. From the beginning the child is organising its experience towards behaviour. Every expression will bring back some impression; and the impression will determine the repetition, modification or inhibition of that expression.

The starting points of conduct are within the child. They lie in what are spoken of as the instinctive dispositions. A child does not need to be taught to suck; we teach him to play particular games, but he does not learn to play; he plays spontaneously. As he gets older he begins to assert himself; to feel shy; to be interested in other children; to be pleased with and to desire praise or recognition. Curiosity early impels the child to observe strange objects, and, when he is old enough, to ask all manner of "whys" and "hows." The growing boy may become one of a "gang"; the adolescent begins to think of sex. Play, assertion, shyness, desire of recognition, curiosity, a liking for the "gang," sex interest, are all forces lying behind behaviour. These are innate tendencies within the child urging him to the kinds of behaviour these terms describe. A normal child exhibits all these tendencies. He expresses himself through them; it is by the expression of these that he comes into contact with his environment; and the

impressions he receives help greatly to determine what he will seek from the world. All his early experience is organised round these instinctive centres. With these he starts out to achieve character and personality.

The problem of character, we may say, is the problem of adjusting instinctive dispositions to moral and spiritual reality. Failure to achieve character, or a spiritual life, is always the outcome of refusal to become adjusted, or of some maladjustment to reality. The fundamental characteristic of our Lord's life from the psychological point of view was unity. His desires were at one with His moral and spiritual ideals—"I and my Father are one;" His will, the direction of all His tendencies, were in the same line as the demands of God's will. "The prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in Me;" there was no desire, no motive, no active interest in His being to which the evil of this world could appeal. His inner interests and tendencies were unified and organised round His Father's Kingdom; and His love of the Father created that affective unity which is the fundamental fact of moral and spiritual life.

Now what are the fundamental realities to which the individual must become adjusted if he is to win a moral and spiritual life? Here we need only mention three.

Very early in life the child comes up against society. This is the reality which is for ever checking and restraining his instinctive activities. It meets him first of all in his home. It imposes its will upon him; his actions must conform to the will of the members of that home else there is restraint and punishment. Later

it is the society of his school and school-mates. He does something which the society of the school disapproves and he is sent to "Coventry." Later still he finds society surrounds him; there is a public opinion about all sorts of conduct; conventions that society expects him to obey; laws relating to his conduct in relation to others, the breaking of which mean social punishment. Somehow if he is to get any peace he must come to terms with this society. He must become adjusted to living with others. He must accept its restraints, or circumvent them, or be restless and unhappy under them.

At puberty and adolescence the growing youth and maid become acutely conscious of sex stirrings. It is not a mere matter of sex curiosity; there are definite physiological and psychological processes occurring in both; and they simply can't help sex thoughts and feelings. Sex is one of the greatest moral realities the adolescent has to face. He or she will be fortunate if nothing has happened in earlier years to make the problem harder. An attitude has to be adopted to the whole of their sex nature and its implications if he or she is to reach a moral life. Is it of the devil or of God? License, control or repression will depend on the answer.

Finally he comes up against the spiritual reality of God. He finds that the restraints of society are said to have a religious sanction; that moral demands are said to be God's will. Moreover, he finds the moral conflict within himself and the need for decision. Psychologically there is much more that leads to ideas of God than the moral conflict, but the idea of God with

some of its implications at least arises in this way and he feels the demand for adjustment.

These are the three ultimate moral realities to which every growing personality has to become adjusted if the moral and spiritual life is to be achieved. The formative years are spent in preparing to become adjusted or maladjusted. In so far as we become adjusted to these realities life becomes a joy. We shall deal with the meaning and attainment of these adjustments as we proceed.

DAWN OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Although from the very beginning of conscious life character-forming forces are at work within and upon the child, the first great formative period is the dawn of self-consciousness. It takes place between three and four years of age. Up to this age the child has known no restraint except what has been imposed on him from without. He has lived in the moment; he has been driven by the passing desire; attracted by the present or promised sensation; indeed he has scarcely realised that he is a separate being.

With self-consciousness all this is changed. He realises that he is an individual with desires of his own, a "mind" of his own, a "will" of his own. He can conceive past, present, and future: "Mamma, me was naughty yesterday, me going to be good to-day." He is now able to compare his conduct according to some kind of standard. Conscience has awakened; he knows good and evil; he has passed from the Garden of Eden.

Another psychological factor which comes into active

power at this time is what Shand and McDougall have called the "Sentiment." Before self-consciousness the child was drawn to objects by its innate interest in them; but the child may now make these objects the end of conscious striving. These various objects organise his inner energies round them; they give direction to his energies; they determine which desires will be indulged, which satisfied. He seeks his Mamma, but he *knows* he seeks her; he may now love his Mamma, which before self-consciousness was impossible. The good of his Mamma may now become a motive of behaviour. It is the sentiments which control the instincts; they imply interests which may become permanent; they determine character; indeed they are character.

With the sentiment is born Will, in both the psychological and ethical sense. Up to this time the child has no will. The "self-willed" child is just a child with certain of its instincts over-developed. Will pertains to sentiment and the striving of the personality as a while. In will the energy of many instincts may be organised on behalf of one object. As the number of objects increase in which the child takes a permanent interest the character becomes stable, has direction, and in the true sense is *will-controlled.* There is only one way of giving a child will-power; it is by strengthening and increasing his permanent interests.

It is also at this period that the sense of "status" is born. The child, conscious of self, is at the same time conscious of others and its position in relation to others. It innately demands status in the home; then in the school, etc. The refusal of this demand lies be-

hind the behaviour of many a delinquent. What the Psycho-analyst calls an "Inferiority Complex" is often created by the conscious or unconscious denial of status on the part of the parent or teacher.

There are other factors coming into play at this period which determine social, ethical and religious attitudes. A sense of justice becomes conscious at this time. Whatever claim a child makes for himself he, by the self-same thought, makes it for the other child; "Ego and Alter are only the same thought with different connotations." "Whatever I fancy for self in general, with no qualification as to which self it is, remains the same whether afterwards I do qualify it by the word *'my'* or by the word *'YOUR.'* Whether the 'you' or 'me' will prevail in any particular child will depend very largely on early training. When a child refuses to grant the claim of the 'alter' which he would make for himself, it is because he has been taught or 'rationalised' for himself some 'difference.' The aristocrat's child gives equality to the charwoman's child until he is taught there is a 'difference.' Always and everywhere, then, 'difference' is the occasion and excuse for ignoring the equal claims."

Enough has been said to impress upon any one the need for realising the importance of this early period. Nevertheless, there is more that must be said if we are to understand how we may win the child for Christ. It is at self-consciousness that the child measures himself against others. He intuitively knows how far he can go. That does not mean that we are to "show him who is master"; but it does mean that the feeling must be conveyed to the child that you seek and

know what is good for him. He must feel that when you withhold anything from him it is from no arbitrary reason, or caprice. A child will almost instantly accept your judgment when he grasps that there is reason behind it.

More important for our immediate purpose in this volume is the growth in the child's conception of, and desire for, God. This is undoubtedly linked up with the "love sentiment." A child has no innate spiritual or moral ideas. But he has what Dr. Hadfield has aptly called "The Urge to completeness." On every level of his being we can see this urge at work. On the physiological it is that "Vis medicatrix" on which we depend for recuperation and the urge to health; on the ethical level we see the urge manifested in the striving towards our ideal; on the psychological the organising activities of the mind make for unity; and now on the spiritual level we see the love sentiment seeking a perfect object.

The strongest urge within the child is the love urge. The thwarting of this urge is the cause of more failures to gain a religious and healthy life than all other causes. The child cannot help seeking the warmth, comfort, approval, recognition and inspiration of affection. He seeks them in the parents first of all; then in schoolfellows, chums and sweetheart in turn. His very attitude to the universe may be finally determined by the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of this urge. He measures God by the amount of love he receives in the world. There can be little doubt, no matter what theologians and philosophers say, that our final attitudes to God, society and destiny are emotionally motivated.

A harsh arbitrary father will make it very hard for the child to find any attraction in the idea of God as "Our Father."

We have now seen something of what psychologically happens with the growing self-consciousness of the child. How tremendously important this period is only those who have had to deal with abnormal adolescents and adults can realise; for in analysis they are nearly always brought back to this period for the causes of failure to become adjusted to the varying experiences of life. The "contrary" or "Bolshevik" adolescent and adult is generally the product of the arbitrary withholding of simple pleasures in childhood. The thwarting of their nature by "authority" invariably tends to create a pathological antagonism to all authority.

From what has been said of this all-important period, the parents must already realise the powerful factor the home is in the formative years. The true beginnings of adjustment to the three fundamental realities are made at this time; and they are made in the home. If by any means one of the parents has roused resentment in the child, it may be repressed into the unconscious; nevertheless the growing boy finds himself with an increasing antagonism to everything which reminds him of the parent. Kleptomania is not seldom due to unconscious resentment; lying may be induced by the effort to win the status which the attitude of parent or teacher has undermined; masturbation is often the direct outcome of corporal punishment.

Space, however, will not allow me to treat of the delinquent child. My task is to try and show how the child can be won for the service and love of our Lord.

All the inner tendencies of the child may be so directed, or sublimated, that every impulse may become a servant of the Christ sentiment. Christ may become his "objective conscience," the very spirit of Jesus may be made the effect of the child's love sentiment; His kingdom direct his will; His teaching inform the sense of justice; His life, death and resurrection determine the child's attitude to God, the soul and destiny.

From the beginning the parents must consciously, intelligently and patiently help the child to become adjusted to society. The child is at first an individualist. His first problem is to become a corporate being; to learn to love and seek the things that gain by being shared. He must learn to rejoice in the success and welfare of his little society. That is no easy task. The young child may envy the presents his brother or sister receives on birthdays; gently the intelligent parent, instead of scolding, will help him to rejoice with those that rejoice; to feel that what success comes to any member of the family all share. When that is accomplished the child is on the way to becoming a corporate individual, seeking not selfish ends but corporate ends. He will pass to the school and rejoice in every scholastic or athletic success any member or team brings to the school even though he has had no share in realising it. He will quickly learn to work for the success of his Form rather than from the morbid desire to be at the top; he will be a team man in group play, etc., etc. When he reaches manhood the Kingdom of God will then become a fundamental motivating power in all his actions. Unselfishness will characterise his behaviour to others. Society will cease to be a restrain-

ing power; it will then constrain him. In his relationships with other human beings, and in co-operation with them for social ends, he will find life's true values. Society will have become the "means of his moral life." Society now constrains him; its good is identical with his good; he neither resents its legitimate restraints nor attempts to circumvent them; they are his guides. He is adjusted to society.

But for this to happen definite training is needed. When the child becomes self-conscious its education in the home is by way of breathing in its atmosphere rather than obeying its precepts. In a word there is a "public opinion" in the home by which the growing child receives its standard of moral and spiritual values. The content of its conscience is being given.

There is no subject on which even Christian parents need enlightenment more than that of conscience. The child is born with no innate standard of good and evil. Within the child there is an active tendency towards the conduct he has learned as "good." When this tendency is overborne by the strong desire of some impulse the child feels the "pangs of conscience." But the child is not given the standard of good. He accepts by suggestibility the standard implicit in the public opinion of the home. It is not what he is taught, but what he observes that is all important. It is what the home and school spontaneously condemn or approve; the good rejoiced in; the evils deplored; the talk at the father's table; the conversation out of school hours in the dormitory and playground; the attitude of parents to each other, and to life in general, that give the first and lasting content to conscience. The extreme

suggestibility of the young mind, and the exaggerated prestige of the parents, teachers, and seniors in school, make it very hard for the growing child to resist the ideals of home and school. They become his standard of values; the measure of his own conduct; the reach of his conscience. The keen conscience is the outcome of an atmosphere wherein whatsoever things are lovely and of good report are conveyed spontaneously.

All this applies equally well to the standard of justice. By his innate sense of justice the child realises what is meant by playing fair; and there is a tendency to do it. But what is "fair," what is just, he unconsciously learns from our actions, conversations and attitudes.

I must not be understood to imply that there is no conflict between the child's instinctive desires and what is conveyed to him as good or just. There is always a conflict. Instinctive actions offer immediate satisfactions, intense pleasure. Conscience, on the other hand, often has nothing but hard tasks, remote satisfactions and self-denial.

It is because there is conflict that discipline is needed. The young tree needs turning to the sun. Love and strictness, discipline and freedom, are not antitheses. If these are not to be made to appear as though they were antagonistic then it must be clearly understood what a sentiment means. The sentiment involves the true and permanent good of the object—in this case the child. An intelligent conception of the permanent good of the child involves strictness and discipline. The child has to be taught that life makes moral claims upon him; he has to be guided into moral and spiritual

freedom. But this means freedom from inward restraints—the domination of isolated impulses; freedom to act along the line of the ideal. As Pfister puts it: "Genuine strictness is free from arbitrariness; it does not want to play the master for the pleasure of showing its power; it commands and forbids only that which, after mature consideration, it considers good and therefore possible of accomplishment; but having come to a decision it insists on fulfilment."

The very nature of the sentiment determines the kind of strictness and discipline needed. The permanent good of the child bars out the giving of anything, however much pleasure it may immediately bring, if it is to endanger the permanent good of the child. Many a mother has been tempted to save her child present suffering; but the good of the child as a whole corrects this natural tendency. "The essential thing is that the demands of discipline shall not be imposed merely from without, after the manner of a drill sergeant, or by appealing to base and sensual motives. We must show their connexion with the innermost personality of human beings, and must translate them into the language of that personality. We must show that it is by discipline that the personality frees itself from the tyranny and caprices of selfishness, and gains control over the life of the senses." It is in this way that the child gains will-control. Lack of self-control does not mean that the child is acting in virtue of something outside the self; but that he is impelled by isolated impulses not yet swept into purposes of the organised or will-self.

Probably the most important thing we have to keep

in mind during these early formative years is the fact that he is unconsciously taking up his attitude to God and the world. It is, as has already been said, an emotional attitude in the first instance, however true it is that later a rational basis is sought for the attitude. From the parents' attitude to religion, and equally their attitude to him, the child derives his attitude to God, the soul and the world. The father is the boy's first hero; and very largely his God. If your conception of God demands a strictness and discipline that denies simple pleasures, arbitrary inhibitions, religion is going to be hard for your child. Is not God too often associated with our restraints instead of being linked with every pleasure and legitimate joy of the child? It is at this period and not later that the growing heart and mind must be brought into living contact with the idea of God we have seen in Jesus Christ. The need to love and be beloved is active during these years; and its satisfaction ought to be linked with God as the giver of all love. In this way the Christ sentiment is acquired.

The power to form sentiments which becomes active from the dawn of self-consciousness onwards, ought to be utilised to help the child to acquire a permanent interest in those objects, ideas and ideals which will organise his inner energies on behalf of good conduct. Education, as Professor James noted long ago, is just the organisation of the innate and acquired tendencies towards behaviour. An early love of God, Sunday School, Goodness, Purity, etc., will mean that the conflicts—moral, spiritual and intellectual—of adolescence, will be fought out within these interests and not away

from them as so often happens. A boy may get away from the organised forces of religion; nevertheless if an early sentiment is acquired it will manifest itself in some cognate service. Many a social worker, outside the Church, is unconsciously sustained by a religious "complex,"—an emotional interest in the Kingdom of God early aroused. Many an adolescent through this sentiment for Church and school has been kept in touch with both when doubt and passion were tearing him away. The "Will to Believe" is determined by emotional attitudes; and these, in turn, depend on the sentiments we have helped the growing boy or girl to acquire.

PUBERTY

The second adjustment we mentioned was to Sex. How few fathers or mothers ever look back to the puberty and adolescent stage and recall the habits and the phantasies whose power was the hardest thing they had to overcome in the early days of Christian life.

We cannot go into detail here on the vexed question as to how far sex does enter into formative forces of character. All we can do is to insist that wise parents and teachers will never be afraid to deal with these questions. They will lovingly watch for the first stirrings of the sex life and guide them through puberty and adolescence. They will patiently strive to enlighten the growing mind. Personally I agree with Freud's recommendation that we should answer a child's questions only to the limit of the child's understanding. From the first sex questions of early

childhood to the more serious of adolescence and puberty, the whole sex nature should be put on a very high level. Procreation is of God, and not of the devil. It is a prerogative bestowed by God. Therefore we must instil high ideals of purity within our sex nature and not in opposition to it; we must create a chivalrous love of woman, the sense of responsibility to the mate God is one day to send, and to the children that will be theirs. In this way sexual temptation will be robbed of half its power. We must be careful to teach the young that impurity is not a giving way to a lower nature but a crucifying of the higher nature. Love itself would be an impossibility but for this side of our being; the tender emotion is linked with it, and is generated by it.

In helping boys and girls to control their impulses we must be very careful not to inspire repression. We must help them to sublimate; to take their creative energy and turn it into the creative channels of vocation, profession, social service, indeed of character. Above all, love objects are the surest safeguards. And if before puberty and adolescence are reached we have been helping our children to acquire true sentiments for God, Christ, Society, Woman, Children, we shall have provided the only real safeguards against sexual pre-occupation.

An even more delicate tact is needed in dealing with the shame which rises in a youth who has given way to any sexual temptation. Harshness is fatal; and only leads to neurotic and moral complications all too familiar to the medical psychologist. Corporal punishment as often as not drives the trouble deeper. Kind

and sympathetic guidance alone can keep this kind of shame from wrecking the possibility of a moral and spiritual life.

ADOLESCENCE

In turning now to the final period with which I am asked to deal, I cannot but draw your attention to the quotation with which the chapter commenced. Adolescence is the harvest-time of all that has gone before. Nevertheless, there are well defined characteristics of this period that make it very important for the reaping of the harvest for Jesus Christ. It is the age of idealism; the age of decision; the age of hopes; of awaking love. The years before will have determined the kind of ideals that are likely to appeal; the objects on which decisions will be taken; the kind of hopes suffusing the mind; and what the awaking love is to promise. Just because this period has these characteristics the possibility of correction of early aberrations is at its maximum.

Already we have seen that this is the time of moral conflict. Moral conflict is only possible where idealism is present. The growing mind is faced with a dualism within; the isolated impulses, desires, ambitions, with their promise of immediate satisfactions come into conflict with the moral urge to perfection, and the strong urge of the conscience. By his very innate idealism the adolescent cannot camouflage his conscience with the impossibility of his high ideals. Evil is never so real again as at this period. The youth not only believes in ideals but he believes in idealism. He thinks in terms

of what ought to be; he has no doubt as to whether the ideal can arise amid the actual. To him that is an immediate inference.

What makes this period so decisive is the fact that the idea of the Self becomes clearer to consciousness. The human being is a rational and moral being; but these abstract ideas do not play a very important part until now. Habits, desires, etc., have been formed in the preceding years; but at this period the growing mind realises vividly that these are "mine," "Me." There comes a more objective view of the self. It comes up for judgment. It is this that makes the moral and intellectual conflict so intense. Though the Self-sentiment—together indeed with all the sentiments—has been functioning during earlier years, it is now that it may become the conscious integrating factor in character and personality. This ideal Self which can now be objectively seen comes into conscious conflict with the actual Self; and the adolescent may try to break away from the tendencies and desires, etc., which he finds within himself. In any case the self-sentiment, and the idea of the Self which the adolescent has become aware, begin to organise experience around themselves. He now begins to identify himself with his behaviour. He experiences ideas, desires, feelings and actions as "mine," and he must settle whether they are worthy of him.

Again, his ideas of God, of Christ, of the Church; his attitudes, social and individual, are now brought spontaneously to the bar of rational judgment. They must receive rational sanction else there is no inner peace; no conscious unity; there is a "divided self."

It is difficult to over-estimate this vivid awareness of the moral and rational Self as a formative factor in the moral and spiritual life of the adolescent. What the moral self ought to be will depend very largely on previous training; the power rationally to evaluate that self will be determined to some extent by the education received. Yet not wholly. In virtue of his individuality the adolescent will have his own point of view, and may demand a greater self than the prevailing moral standards; he may seek a more rational conception of the fundamental realities than his fathers. That is why in the adolescent period "authority" must give way to the innate demand for freedom. When we have tried to instil high moral content to conscience, and unfolded our conception of God in Christ, we must stand aside as it were, that the decision of the adolescent may be his own. There is no danger like a second-hand religion. We must so work that his religion will be his own—a speaking with God as God has spoken to him.

It is in this period also that volition or will becomes intensely self-conscious. Up to this time the youth has will in the sense that he makes decisions. But these are motived and determined largely by the various sentiments he has acquired. At adolescence, there ought to be a tendency towards some sentiment which will organise all the inner energies around itself. Each sentiment will then play its part in relation to this ruling sentiment. There can be no strong, stable character or personality without a dominating sentiment; and the kind of sentiment that ascends the throne of the self will determine the kind of personality achieved.

It is these facts that have determined adolescence as the period of moral and spiritual decisions. Few, if any, would question Professor Starbuck's conclusion: "Conversion is an adolescent phenomenon." We can see why. For personality, for the satisfaction of the self-sentiment, the self must settle what kind of a self it means to become. Affective moral and rational needs now cry for gratification. The soul demands a universe friendly to its needs. And in so far as Christ is presented as the way, and the goal of those clamant needs, the adolescent will decide for Christ. How hard the decision will be depends almost entirely on the training up to this period.

Decision, then, is the most fundamental need of this time. Just as adolescence must decide on vocation, and concentrate on preparation if worldly success is to be gained; so it is the period when it must be brought home that spiritual decision is even a greater need. The adolescent who wants to be nothing in particular seldom becomes a successful business man. Without decision the strong, unified, moral and spiritual personality is a psychological impossibility.

It is not within the province of this chapter to discuss the kind of ideas of God, Christ, Pleasure, etc., which ought to be kept in mind throughout all the formative years. Psychology cannot deal with the validity of ideas. Nevertheless psychology can test these ideas from its own standpoint. Moral personality from the psychological point of view is characterised by unity:—the inner elements of instincts, conscience, individuality, reasons, sentiments, are all co-operating in the interests of the personality as a

whole. Every idea we try to instil into the young mind can be tested by its effect on the harmony or disharmony it produces. Any ideas which mean the repression of any part of our nature stand condemned. The good life is not the life free from passion; psychologically that would be a bad life; the good life is that wherein the passions are swept into some large purpose within which the various elements of the personality are being satisfied; it is positive and never negative.

This to a large extent gives parent and teacher their task. In the first years the child is guided almost wholly by pleasure and pain. Anything that gives satisfaction to the innate tendencies will be desired, and anything that thwarts them will raise resentment, as well as make the child avoid it. We must try to choose wisely for the child the pleasures he will enjoy and the pains he will seek to avoid. But our choice must be made by trying to conceive what is best for the personality as a whole. From the first we must be helping the child and the early and late adolescent to sublimate his impulses. We must continually be seeking to give the growing mind a many-sided interest in life, morality and religion, rather than a many-sided knowledge. It is interest that matters, and if a deep interest has been created in the home years, the adolescent period may be passed safely, or if not, then that interest will in the long run bring him back "home." All the early training should keep in mind the final self-conscious decision we desire our children to make for Christ. We must so present Him that the growing Youth will see in Him the ideal he desires to realise; and we must

show that in His service the whole nature is satisfied.

At that period the work of teacher usually stops. But sanctification is just as necessary as decision or conversion. It is often in the desire for sanctification that the growing Christian comes against the difficulties. Very often the cause of the difficulty lies far back. It is now that the minister's training ought to come in with power. The minister should be an expert in guiding the young Christian to sanctification. He ought to understand the difficulties that confront the Christian as well as the doctor knows the difficulties of bodily health, or the psychotherapist the disturbing factors of nervous trouble. It is no use covering up our ignorance by ascribing all backsliding to sin. That gives no more guidance than the doctor would give if he ascribed everything to disease! Certainly it is all disease in the domain of imperfect health. But why one disease rather than another? Was there a predisposition? So, the wise minister will proceed with the growing Christians who find sanctification hard. Each one will find it hard at different points. This is not chance. We must then look back through the early training and find its defects either in indulgence or strictness, and correct them. We must not be satisfied merely to win the adolescent for Christ and then leave him as though he would have no temptations. He may have had few till then! We must win them wholly for Christ. That must be the aim underlying the whole of the formative years.

Chapter III

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

THOMAS PATERSON, M.A.

"You English," said King Khama, "take great care of your goods, but you throw away your children." There is still a sting of truth in the reproach, but we are growing wiser. Everywhere the eyes of thoughtful men are being fixed upon the child. Education has become almost an obsession. The hinge of destiny, we recognise, turns upon youth. "All our problems centre in the child. In the treatment of the child the world foreshadows its own future and its faith. All words and all thinking lead to the child—to that vast immortality and wide sweep of infinite possibility which the child represents."—(Du Bois). The welfare of the nation, the Church, the whole human race—the very possibility of the Kingdom of God—lies in the heart of the child. The situation is one we must face. There is no escape. It confronts each new generation afresh. For the Christian mind the norm and mood with which it has to grapple this tremendous problem is the spirit and example of Jesus Christ. The very emphasis which has come to be set upon the value of the child is due directly to the influence of Christ and the spread of Christian enlightenment amongst men. Christ has rescued the ideal of childhood and sanctified forever all that pertains to it. Our inspiration and our guidance are to be found in Him. From our comprehension of

the spirit of Christianity, we might, without much risk of error, have inferred what our attitude to the young life growing up in our homes should be. Fortunately, we have facts more definite to guide us. Among the sweetest glimpses of the real life of long ago which lies behind the New Testament record is that of Jesus and the children. Throughout these pages which deal with the most momentous issues that affect the human soul—questions as high as heaven and deep as hell—we rejoice to hear the pattering of children's feet, and see, ever and again, the gleam of bright young faces, eager in the Master's presence; we hear His voice—"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." It is like finding violets on a mountain-side. Our faith is humanised, and we are brought into kindlier touch with the days of old. No systems of theology or doctrine can contain the atmosphere and fragrance which meet our spirit there. Omit the incidents of the intercourse of Jesus with the children, as our Church creeds do, and no great principle of Christian faith is touched, nothing of vital moment seems to have been removed. But think again, and one is conscious that something fine and sweet and beautiful has gone. Unspeakable would be the loss. We realise that this portion of the sacred history has now become to us priceless. The tenderest and truest of our thoughts of Jesus comes when we have the vision of Him amongst the children. There is not a single word of His in this regard that we could lightly give up. Every heart that has ever throbbed with the love of a little child is drawn closer to the Master's side because He loved children too. There we must stand to learn to see them

with His eyes, and catch something of the very thought of God. Indeed, we almost rejoice that once the disciples made the rash mistake of supposing that "the little children" were of no interest to Jesus, because, by that very gesture, they caused the winsome tenderness and the gracious spirit of His loving heart to shine so swiftly and so clearly forth. Since that day, what Jesus thought about the children is a question which need be asked no more.

The essence of true greatness is said to lie in the abiding of the child-heart, and we see this in its perfection in Jesus Christ Himself. Only in passing shall we speak of the Childhood of Jesus. But it is good to call to mind that He too was once a child, and thereby threw a new lustre upon childhood. Surely behind the brief announcement: "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," we can see a sweet, lovable, and loving child in Joseph's home in Nazareth. There He knew and played with other children. It was part of His initiation into the knowledge of the life of man, and His appointed lot. Nor could the memory of these days altogether depart from Him. It is difficult to say how much children are impressed by the fact that once Jesus was a child like them, but it creates a sympathetic interest and a link of fellowship.

As for the inner mind of Jesus, we know how early it became a vital, filial consciousness, and so remained through all His earthly days. His whole life was simply a movement in the way of obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father, the accomplishing of His "Father's business." He was God's perfect Son.

CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TO THE CHILDREN

The interest of Christ's attitude is here, that it was the attitude of the perfect man, the Divine Son of God, with clear vision of God's purpose in man, and towards man, and perfect knowledge of the qualities and needs of human nature. By birth He was of Jewish race, and amongst the Jews especially, children have ever been an interest and a joy. That is the pride and boast of Judaism still. Children are appreciated, loved, and nurtured with the utmost care for their place and part in life. The mere instinct of racial preservation does not account for this. It has its roots in their religious genius, and runs back to their faith in God. "The Jews never neglect any child. This one factor is the key of their supremacy." So writes one of our modern social psychologists, and it is true. The duty was imbedded deep amongst the injunctions of their religion, and upon every devout Jewish father was laid the strict charge of the careful religious instruction of his family. The very ritual of his worship appealed to childish minds and stimulated the question: "What mean ye by this service?" A more perfect opportunity for the beginning of an education which was at once both religious and national cannot be conceived. It was an opportunity which was not neglected. "In no denomination," says Rabbi Green, "does the religious training of children take a higher place than among the Jews" and they have reaped their reward. When Josephus argued against Apion he said, "Our principal care of all is to educate our children." And in the Talmud, that ancient book of gathered wis-

dom, it is written, "By the breath of the children the world is preserved." This was the attitude towards the children with which Jesus came naturally into contact. It was the mind and habit of every devout and thoughtful Jew. It was a high purpose and a sacred tradition which Jesus accepted, and enhanced and enriched. He was more than a pious and thoughtful Israelite. He was the Son of God, and He looked out upon the children with "royal eyes." When we see Him then in their company it is as a King disguised. He is completely aware of His Messianic vocation, filled with the infinite love of God in His purpose of Redemption, aware of the endless glory and possibility of human life as no wisest Rabbi ever was. He knew the destiny of the human soul as God knew it. In a child, Jesus was confronted with the whole potentiality of the life of man for good or evil. There it lay, wrapt up, as yet unspent and unspoiled, appealing to His wisdom and to His love. How will He reach that young soul? How, respecting its freedom and its immaturity, will He seek to win it and keep it for God? When Jesus is face to face with a little child, it is a situation of teeming interest. It is the Love of God, incarnate, in touch with the highest creative work of God, a child, in whom is still a soul of liberty. For we never see the real significance of a child unless we set it against the background of God. If Tennyson's thought was lifted up to heaven by his contemplation of the "flower in the crannied wall," acknowledging that there could be no final interpretation of it being unless in the light of the Divine, how much more is all that true when we look upon the living mystery of a little child. It is something so

wonderful, so astounding, so amazing that, as somebody has said, were it not that children really were we could not believe that they were possible. A child is the latest revelation of God's creative handiwork, the last impress of his wondrous image. "A small immortal, one short step within Time's portal." Romance ever clings to the skirts of childhood.

"And there I see—these sparkling eyes
These stores of mystic meaning. These young lives
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas
On the soul's voyage.
Only a lot of boys and girls?
Ah! More, infinitely more!"

WHITMAN.

When we seek to reckon all the elements of wondrous being which are implicit in a child's existence, and ask what lies behind—"How did they all come to be?"—we cannot find a better answer than the poet gave—

"God thought about me and so I grew.
How did you come to us, you dear?
God thought about you, and so I am here."

The pure eye of Jesus looked upon the children and saw the radiance of their creation as a crown upon their heads. He saw them in the thought, and purpose, and love of God, very near to God and very precious in His sight. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Whatever other revelation lies behind these words, they are surely a proclamation of the love

of God for all little children, whose lives to Him are dear. It was in this spirit, the spirit of gracious love, in which Jesus approached the children, and indeed it is the only pathway along which we can get near a child's real heart. They were God's children, made for fellowship and service. He had breathed into them the breath of life. Not yet were they aware of the splendour of their destiny, nor of the assailment and temptation of the world which they must meet. Jesus knew. All He could do was to love them, bless them, and fill their hearts with the love of God. For this was their best defence. The pathos of life for Him was that all men had once begun as "little children," near to God, close to His love, but had wandered far away on the road of sin. They must come back. "Ye must be born again." Life must be made over afresh. The child-heart must be the starting-point anew. They must learn to rest in God's love, and trust in His guidance. When, young or old, we attain this child-like spirit, we hear His voice in, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

As we think again of Jesus and the children we are left with the impression of an attitude more than anything else—an attitude of infinite tenderness, reverence and love—the very spirit of the grace of God. It is this attitude we must seek to learn, for in it lies the secret of all wise sympathy, of all true teaching, and that regard for the interest of the child which is a reflection of the mind of Christ. "Whenever a day comes when I can receive a boy into my school without emotion it will be time for me to be off." So said Dr.

Arnold of Rugby. Dr. Grenfell, talking of teachers, puts the same thought thus, "Shew me a teacher who does not love his boys and you shew me one who is of no use." They had both learned in the school of Jesus, and they had learned well.

We have no instance of any formal instruction of the children on the part of Jesus. Most of them, probably, were too young for this. Had the record of even one talk remained it would have been a priceless gem. But there is none. We can but imagine that He who understood them so perfectly and loved them so deeply, would speak of birds and flowers and the great deeds of their race—such things as young hearts love—and lift their thoughts from these still higher, to the reality of the great, good Father in Heaven, stirring and answering at once the "queer unanchored thoughts of childhood," gently awakening the young soul to life, watching it open to the sunshine of the face of God. He could not talk to them of "the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." The agony and passion of the Cross were waters far too dark and deep for young hearts to fathom. One day they might come to know that all that was but a deeper plunge of the love of God. The knowledge and understanding of these things lay in the days ahead. We can tell it to our children now and let it make its own appeal. What does remain clear and unmistakable is the loving and reverential regard of Jesus for the children. They were precious in His sight. They were God's. And this must be the Christian attitude always. It is not surprising that one of the hardest words Jesus ever uttered was against those who should dare to hurt a child,

"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Jesus has thrown this defence around childhood, and innocence, and trusted love, and who makes base assaults on these does so at his eternal peril. Once in His life Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, and no good shepherd but has a special care towards the lambs. Surely we are justified in seeing in His last charge to Peter, "Feed My lambs," a token of Christ's care for the children, His safeguarding for them a place in the life and love of His people and His Church. The attitude of Jesus adds its own glory to even the purest natural affection for the children. It lifts love to its highest level. It tinges it with the glory of God. The service of childhood is the service of Christ Himself.

It is in this attitude that we must look for the chief teaching of Jesus about the children. But there is one illuminating word which it is worth while to consider. "Whoso," He said, "shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me." It suggests that God comes very close to the heart that prepares for and receives the coming of a little child as the gift of God's grace. Christ, in the closest imaginable way, identifies Himself with the children, so that service and love for them are in truth service and love for Himself. True parenthood has thus a sacramental grace. If we had to deal with the child Jesus, how prayerful, and loving, and tender, we should be in contact with His young life. This is how Jesus would have us approach all children. It is the warrant for the teacher's most consecrated

devotion, and the guarantee of the glory and the blessing of his service. It is a work uniquely acceptable in the Master's sight.

As regards the response of the children to Jesus, for the most part, only conjecture is possible for us. They appear always on terms of easy friendship. The appeal and fascination of His love could not but win them, for love, as has been said, is the language a child best understands. But on one occasion we hear the sound of their young and adoring voices, and we gather that by it Christ was strangely moved—"Hosanna to the Son of David." They could hardly have penetrated to the great secret of His personality, but it is quite evident that they acclaimed Him with gladness, as one whom they knew, one whom they loved, and quite easily rose to the thought of Him as some great person destined for highest honour. They were unconscious prophets, and nearer the truth than they were aware. Jesus recognised this. The truly child-like heart has a rare gift of penetration, and here it had vision while the world was blind. For them at least there was no incongruity that their friend, Jesus, should be acclaimed the heaven-sent Messiah. "What a child cannot understand of Christianity, no one need try to." In these words Ruskin has expressed a deep truth. In their voices was the acclaim of coming generations, and as Jesus heard them, something of the voice of God. By the leaping intuition of a pure, loving heart they had discovered the soul of truth, and accepted Jesus as their Lord.

Childlike love and trust in Jesus lead the soul "far ben" into the highest mysteries of God. The logic of

catechisms has little influence on a child's mind, but the power of love and personality is certain. Doctrinal definitions have their use, but later. Sufficient to begin with, it is for a child to know Jesus, so that its confidence and love for Him are won. On that foundation the noblest life can be erected. I once asked a little child whose heart was held by the appeal of Jesus, why was it that she loved Him so. Her reply was, "I cannot tell." Pressed to think again, she answered, "It must be because I know He loves me more than anybody else does." When we so present Jesus that a child's heart is enlightened, and responds like this, we have done well. For after all, the greatest fact of revelation of which the Cross itself is but the signal and compelling evidence, is that "God is love," and when a child has once learned that it has the marrow of all theologies, and a grasp of things eternal. What satisfies a child's pure heart satisfies the heart of man. It is to feel that we belong to God. "Infancy is the perpetual Messiah which comes into the arms of fallen men and pleads with them to return to Paradise."—(Emerson). In this response to Jesus, as in so many other things, "a little child shall lead them."

Sir George Adam Smith, in Palestine, once saw a shepherd carrying a lamb. He asked if it had a broken leg, or was it tired, or why should the shepherd so care for it. The shepherd said it was nothing of that kind at all. He pointed to an old sheep that was gravely trotting by his side and said—"That is the mother, and she has a strange habit of wandering. The only way I can keep her with the flock is by taking her lamb—and carrying it."

Chapter IV

THE CHURCH AND THE CHILD

J. WILLIAMS BUTCHER

I: HISTORICAL

In theory, the Christian Church has always recognised the importance of Child life, and has made provision for its due training in things "that pertain to life and godliness." Practice, however, has not always walked side by side with theory. The methods employed have been mechanical and conventional rather than inspiring and effective. The energies of the Church have been directed towards the adult, and it has been assumed that the child must reach the "years of discretion" before the Church need greatly concern itself about its welfare. To this indictment there are *many and notable exceptions;* it simply states a general, though by no means a universal, condition.

In the "Book of the Law"—our Deuteronomy—very careful provision is made for the religious training of childhood, and the Christian Church received this heritage. St. Paul's words, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," are an echo of Hebrew custom, and it is evident from certain of his greetings that the children of the members of the Church were, in the apostolic age, regarded as of the Church. Catechetical classes were a recognised and

important part of the organisation of the early Church, and whilst these prepared converts for Baptism and gave instruction in the doctrines of the Faith, they provided for the care of children as well as for the guidance of adults. With the growth of the power of the priesthood from the fourth century onward, the Church seems to have contented itself largely with the administration of Baptism and early Confirmation. At the same time it must not be forgotten that such provision for education as obtained was mainly in the hands of the priesthood, or in the excellent schools associated with the monasteries that were dotted all over Europe.

With the Reformation there came a change. The Reformed Churches realised the necessity for more careful instruction of the child in matters of the Faith. This reacted upon the Roman communion as witnessed by the edicts of the Council of Trent (1545-63) to the effect that "the bishops shall take care that at least on the Lord's Day and other festivals the children of the parish be carefully taught the rudiments of the faith and obedience to God and their parents." The Anglican Church made genuine efforts to secure the religious training of the young, and in 1559 an instruction was issued forbidding children to attend Holy Communion before they had reached their twelfth birthday, and requiring that they should "be well instructed beforehand."

Then came the days of the Catechisms, and, apart from the powerful influence of the home, religious instruction was mainly catechetical. This is not the place to discuss at length the value of this method. Its

appeal was to the head rather than to the heart; it cultivated memory rather than intelligence. At the same time it must be confessed that a sturdy type of Christian manhood flourished under the influence of the "Westminster," the "Shorter" and similar catechisms, that for so many years held the field as the one way in which the Church sought to discharge its task of religious education.

With the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century there came a marked change over the conception of the relation of the Church to the Child, and of the Child to the Church. Before he came into contact with Moravian influence, while he was still the orthodox Anglican parson of his age, John Wesley had a strong sense of the duty of the Church to care for the spiritual interest of the child. It is on record that in his missionary days in Georgia he admitted four boys to Holy Communion after "having been instructed daily for several weeks." His approval of the work of Hannah Ball of High Wycombe is typical of his desire that the children should be taught and trained as those for whom the Church was responsible.

Robert Raikes followed Miss Ball in founding the Sunday School movement, and though at first this work was outside the control of the Churches, yet it soon came to be recognised as a powerful auxiliary, and today it is owned as an integral part of all Church work. To link School and Church more closely one to the other there sprang up various organisations, such as the Christian Endeavour, Guilds of various types and, in the Wesleyan community, the Junior Society Class. It would be difficult to estimate the results secured by

these methods; they have been, and they are, very great. There is, however, a growing conviction that their relation to the Church is not sufficiently intimate: they are too often regarded as "auxiliaries," and the tendency is to leave to these institutions that responsibility for the Child that should be the immediate duty of the Church. In other words, the day has come when the Church, *qua Church,* must concern itself as fully for the Child as for the Adult.

II: DOCTRINAL

The doctrines held by the various sections of the Church of necessity affect their practice. There is no trace of any theory of infant damnation in the teaching of the sub-apostolic days, but as the doctrines of "Original Sin" and "Total Depravity" hardened it was inevitable that the question of the relation of children to the Fall, and to its consequent punishment should arise. Salvation was ministered through the Church because the Church was "the Body of Christ," the company of those who, through faith in Him, were redeemed from the consequences of the Fall. Outside the Church there was no salvation. Hence children must be received into the Church by Baptism: there was no salvation for the unbaptised. This was the teaching of Augustine, and it is the foundation of the dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, a dogma insisted on by the Roman and by certain of the Episcopal Churches of to-day. Inherited sin is washed away in Baptism, and inherited guilt, carrying liability to punishment, is cancelled. The implications of this teaching

are such that the more recent thought of the Reformed Churches has rejected it. So stringent is the necessity of Baptism that in the Churches that most strongly emphasise this necessity "the sacrament may, under certain circumstances, be administered by any one." In justice to those who thus teach, it should be recognised that the Church sustains towards the baptised child a special responsibility to instruct and train the child in all that concern its spiritual life.

A strongly defined doctrine of "Depravity" is held by many who reject the dogma of Baptismal Regeneration. It is taught that all children are "conceived and born in sin." Article IX of the Church of England voices the teaching of certain of the Free Churches even of our own days. "Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." This teaching is supported by "proof texts" that are often passages of Scripture torn from their natural context and made to carry a burden that is not justified.

The godly men who held this "stern" theology do not seem to have given full place to the redemptive work of our blessed Lord. If humanity was "summed up" in its one representative—Adam—so that "in Adam all die"; it has also been included in its second and greater Representative—Jesus Christ—and "in Him shall all be made alive." The "Fall" is countered by the "Cross." It is surely Scriptural to believe that "Original guilt and liability to punishment on

account thereof" is fully cancelled by the One who "offered Himself a sacrifice for sin." The realisation of this fact has given to the Church a more hopeful message and a fuller understanding of the "love of God in Christ Jesus."

Largely owing to the teaching of Horace Bushnell, emphasised in our own days by the luminous thought of Prof. G. A. Coe, a new conception of Child Religion has found favour. The oft quoted words of Bushnell refer to the influence of the Christian home, and to the "atmosphere" that affects not only the child from the day of its birth, but has also a definite part in determining the character of the child soon to be born; pre-natal influences count for much. "In the Christian family the Child should grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise." From the standpoint of the influence of the Church upon young life, Dale of Birmingham voices a similar thought when he says, "The Christian Church should be an institution to render adult conversion needless." The phrase, "Conversion by Education," though it be as "heresy" to some, is happily recognised by many as the true interpretation of St. Paul's words, "bring them up in the nurture and discipline of the Lord." We are turning with a sense of revolt from the attitude of a mother who, when the superintendent of a Sunday School complained of the conduct of her fifteen year old son, said, "Yes, but you see it was necessary that he should go wrong before he could be converted; now I hope he will soon be saved." The home and the Church alike stand condemned when our children play the part of the prodigal and wander into the far country. It is weary

work, that sad return. The definite, patient, intelligent care of parents and teachers should rob the "far country" of all its attraction, and make the "home" so full of delight and of adventurous service that it fills the programme both for to-day and for to-morrow. One who looms large in the life of our nation to-day once said, "The greatest peril that confronts Britain is the displacement of the home and the dethronement of the parent." Is it a fact that whilst the attitude of the Church toward child life has changed for the better, the sense of parental responsibility has weakened? If that be so, then one task that awaits the Church is the rousing of all parents that come under its influence to this, the first and foremost of their duties:—The religious training of their children.

III: CONSTRUCTIVE

Yesterday has its message; to-day has its interests, but the call of to-morrow is the most important. So great is the task before the Church if the Nation is to be in fact, as it is in name, a Christian land—if the present indifference of the masses toward things spiritual is to be changed into a fuller understanding of their nature and destiny—that we, remembering that "the children of to-day are the citizens of to-morrow," need to think out with great care our plan of campaign.

(*a*) *The Development of the Sunday School.* There is a danger lest the advocacy of a new plan should be supposed to imply adverse criticism of the work done by our forefathers. Let it be a sufficient answer to

say that they lived and wrought in life's yesterday: we are thinking of to-morrow. Child Psychology has so modified educational method that the workers in Sunday School dare not be content with a policy of what has been, shall be. Much of our work has been void of a well-thought-out, definite purpose: it has been pleasantly casual. This is not the place to attempt a history of the movement; if it were, much could be explained and justified. It was a long time before the Church consented to mother the School. When it did, it placed the "nursery" in dreary premises and employed the untrained as nurses. The planning of the work has lacked true educational purpose and method. The heresy that any one will do for a Sunday School teacher has greatly impaired the spiritual results that should be the one great aim of the work, and has in some quarters produced an unspiritual atmosphere.

Happily the last few years have witnessed a change. The connection of Church and School is much more intimate than it was. The growth of the "Graded" system has attracted a better type of worker, whilst the preparation classes, that are an essential part of the system, have fostered a real sense of responsibility. Still much remains to be done. Premises need adaptation that the Graded School may be properly housed and equipped. The resources of the School must be husbanded so that suitable appliances can be provided. Money, that is now spent in treats and prizes and other well-meant but unwise inducements, must be used more wisely, and in every way the School must be made attractive for the scholars. For the children the Sunday

School is "God's House;" it should be "God's House beautiful." Whilst personal consecration will ever remain the one essential qualification for the work, we must seek to enlist those who have received a liberal education, and urge upon them the Master's words: "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."

(b) The presence and participation of children in the worship of the Church call for thought. It is generally accepted that the habit of attending the Public Services should be formed during the "habit forming years" (that is to say, before the thirteenth birthday) or it will be difficult to draw the young adolescent to take part therein. It is also coming to be acknowledged that if the child be present, he should be made to feel that he is both wanted and welcomed, and that some part of the service should be so ordered as to make its special appeal to him. Where the service is not strictly liturgical this can easily be done. A children's hymn, prayer and address can be introduced without lowering the tone of the worship. Our young worshippers do not want silly tales or improbable yarns: they will listen to teaching if it be adapted to their understanding. Now and again an adult may object; it might be a timely revelation if he could hear the objections of some children who have to "sit still and be good" throughout a service entirely ordered for adults.

(c) Where a church can rejoice in a large congregation and many willing helpers, it is wise to organise an evening service entirely for young people. In the morning their place is with their elders, that they may

sense the unity of the family of God. A somewhat different state of things will obtain later in the day. Earlier hours and brevity are then considerations.

(d) A readjustment of the time of the Minister is a clamant necessity. Many congregations demand the impossible. They ask that their pastor shall be a "Children's man," and yet fill his life with so many details that really belong to the laity, that what he would do, that he cannot. Also there are ministers whose conception of their ministry is that it is for the benefit of the adults, and who regard work among children as somewhat of a waste of energy. Let such help those who rejoice to minister to the young. Let them teach the teachers and thus enable others to do on a higher plane of efficiency what they prefer to do by deputy rather than attempt themselves.

(e) When the days of childhood are merging into those of youth, special instruction in all that membership of the Church implies is not merely desirable, it is an absolute necessity. The early 'teen years witness the birth of the emotions, and are the days in which youth is specially open to the spiritual appeal. The tables printed in the volumes of Starbuck, Hall and Coe prove this, and their conclusions have been verified by British investigators. It is folly for a Church court to say, "There is no time for these instructional classes." Time must be found, and if other regular meetings prevent, then careful enquiry must be held as to the relative value of these meetings. It is hopeless to let things slide. Prepare carefully for a definite act of Decision: arrange for the first Communion: "Tend my lambs."

(f) The Church must give such a vision of the Christian life that shall claim all the powers of youth, and inspire with a true sense of adventurous service. The mere routine of Church activity fails to prove intensely attractive to the sturdy boy of fifteen or sixteen years, as it also fails to win the modern maiden of a like age. Dr. Ritchie has made this very plain in his "The Teen Years." Those who can see and teach the "Service of Christ" in the "Service of the Other Man" will not fail in their work among youth. The Church can organise activities outside its special order of services, etc., and thus show "that the programme of Christianity is that of wholeness of life from which no human good is excluded." Do not let Religious work be confined to, or confused with, Church work.

(g) There are certain forms of work that are classed under the head of "Auxiliary Agencies." Every Church should recognise the value of these in the training of character. Many deplore the influence of the "Gang," the appeal of the "Team." It is futile. Utilise rather than deplore.

There are men and women who will never fit into certain parts of the Church organisation, but they have a rare and beautiful gift of God: they can win and lead youth. The community that possesses such is false to its opportunities if it fails to give them full scope for such service as they can render. We must get rid of prejudices. Brigades, Scouts, Guides, Clubs of various kinds play a great part in restraining from evil and guiding into the good. It has been well said that Youth is "Body-Mind-and-Spirit" and not "Body, Mind, Spirit." No boy is constructed on the "Water-

tight compartment" principle. Touch him at one point and you touch him at all. Keep his body active, his mind interested in all that is wholesome, and you go a long way to awaken his dormant spiritual facilities.

(h) Should the Church periodically organise Special Missions for the Young? Very rarely, and then with strict limitations and under the guidance of a type of man that is only occasionally to be found. As a rule, Mass appeals do more harm than good to those whose emotions are so easily excited and whose tendencies are gregarious. Emotion spends itself rapidly and once spent it is hard to reawaken. It is wiser to fish with the line than with the net, which being interpreted means that the direct, affectionate, personal appeal, if more difficult, is more hopeful as to permanent results than the appeal *en masse*.

"The future belongs to the children." Let the Church prepare them for their great inheritance.

Chapter V

THE NORMAL RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDHOOD

THISELTON MARK, D.Litt., M.Ed., B.Sc.

The normal is rooted in the natural. When we know the normal, we know the natural; when we know the natural, we know the normal. At present, of course, we know neither; that is to say, with any approach to completeness. Yet we know one or two heartening things as the result of child-study or developmental psychology. We know—even from the physiological comparison of the relative sizes of the head and the rest of the body in babyhood with their relative sizes in the adult—that the boy is born, so to say, brain-foremost. Nature seems bent on guaranteeing him as a thinker. Similarly, with regard to his moral nature. Morality is not a super-normal product, an "extra." It belongs to life as men live it; the more complete their living, the higher their morality; and *vice versa.* "Moral action is healthy action;" or in terms of evolution, "natural selection selects morality." Morality, in a word, belongs to man. It stands for the part he has to play.

Is there any analogy between these things, the child's normal mental development and his normal moral development, and what we must regard as that highest thing—actually inclusive of the other two and of much

besides—his normal religious development? Is that, too, rooted in nature? It was not thought to be so in the days when it was believed (as certain trust-deeds—discreetly, if somewhat compromisingly, hidden from view—still aver) that human nature was universally and totally depraved. Can it be thought to be so in view of the need of which we are all more or less conscious for conversion, or a new spiritual birth "from above?" It is the purpose of this short paper to suggest that it can, and that what we call faith is a normal functioning of powers that are natural to us. There is such a thing as "natural religion," which is often spoken of independently of Christianity; and there is no advantage either in theory or in practice in failing to see that the religion of Jesus Christ takes up all that is included in "natural religion" into itself—intensifying its naturalness, indeed, so enriching and amplifying all that is best and purest in man's spontaneous thought of God that, rightly understood, *the one most supremely natural and satisfying thing in the world* is for a man to be a Christian. From this point of view we may most happily plan for winning our children to Christ; the most sacred and most beautiful task to which man's powers of heart and mind can be devoted.

Is it not evident that, since "our basal tendencies determine our basal interests," we do well to know something of the child's readiness and capacity for response? Underlying the present study, therefore, must be the question: With what basal or instinctive tendencies is the child endowed which make for his normal religious development?

If the idea of God, as Locke was doubtless right

in saying, is a native intuition of the human mind, by which he meant that so soon as the child is able to understand the word "God" he at once recognises it as representing a reality directly known, we are on safe ground in regarding religion as allied with instinctive tendencies. It is *potentially* ours by nature before it becomes actually ours by experience. As Helen Keller, the blind deaf-mute from an accident in infancy, replied to Bishop Potter, when (the gateways of her mind being marvellously opened) he began to give her religious instruction and sought to convey the idea of God: "I have always known It in my thoughts, but I have not known Its name."

A little careful study will enable us to see in what way the child's instinctive tendencies may be regarded as related to his religious development.

I. We may begin with one or two general considerations. In the first place, the impulse to think is born with us. How soon the mind of the child awakes to the wonder of everything, and asks questions to many of which religion, especially the Christian religion, alone gives satisfying answers! Christianity writes the name of God as the All-Father across creation's page. It tells us, for example, as Jesus so beautifully taught, that birds and flowers are both objects, and tokens, of His love and care. These things, that were near to the heart of Jesus, are near also to the heart of the child. Christ's attitude to the wild flower and the bird are, in quality, the same as the child's attitude. The child's attitude to God is, in quality, the same as Christ's attitude to God, so soon as the child understands the name of God in the light of Christ's

revelation. Quite spontaneously a little child in a Liverpool Infant's Day School corrected her teacher, who was describing the scene of Moses and the burning bush, and saying, "And Moses was beginning to be just a little bit afraid." "Why," said the child, "should he be afraid? *God is a good man.*"

Jesus and children, to put it very simply, are—as in His gracious and beautiful life on earth they were—naturally at home with each other. Quite reverently one may say, in view of Christ's own words, *"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven,"* that Christ and children are interested in the same beautiful and natural way in the same beautiful and natural things. The thought of God which so filled the heart and mind of Jesus Christ easily finds its way into the heart and mind of the child. Jesus and children are naturally *friends.* That is what we mean by calling Him *"the children's Friend."* All that is necessary on our part is to heed the Divine behest: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me; and forbid them not." The question at once puts itself: How may we actually help the children to come? The mothers of Salem had discovered the secret. They *brought,* in many cases no doubt carried, their little children to Jesus *"that He might touch them."* Their action was in its own way as symbolical as was Christ's response when He took them up in His arms and blessed them. His words "Suffer them to come," however, imply one thing more; and that the most vital of all. They suggest not only that Jesus wanted them, but that the little ones were showing their own eagerness and "wanted to go" to Him. That kind Friend, Whom they trusted at sight and Who

understood them! "Oh, let them come!" said Jesus.

Our part, therefore, as parents or teachers is, so to speak, to put the children in the way of Jesus; to bring them consciously *to where He is.* If we have our own regular meeting-times or meeting places with Him, our children will know of it, and will be deeply impressed and influenced by it. Actual experience has proved this many times. If our daily practice shows—and it is true enough whether our practice shows it or not—that we cannot live without Jesus Christ, our children will grow to know Him, and will be irresistibly won into His fellowship. To illustrate in a simple way. In the village where the writer lives there is a little church to which a father and a mother came regularly with their children on Sunday mornings. One little girl of five or six used to enter into it all so heartily that her voice was heard delightfully filling up the intervals between the lines of hymns or between the verses. Before she was seven she became very ill, and was soon to leave her earthly home. Her mother was one day at her bedside, talking with her and trying to say words of farewell. The child listened tenderly enough, and then replied, "I love dadda and mamma very much; but I love Jesus best." In that case the little chapel and the Sunday morning singing in the House of Jesus helped to strengthen the hold of the Divine love upon the child's heart. It helped to put the child in the way of Jesus. And that is really the chief part of our task: *to bring the children and Jesus together.* Not to teach much, not to plead or to urge, but to bring them near to Him that He may "touch them."

II. Next, a word or two from the point of view of the normal development of childhood and youth.

(1) So far as the infant years are concerned, they are the parents' hour of opportunity. The teacher is by the nature of the case well nigh at a loss. Religion almost must be of and from the home. But in childhood proper, say from the sixth to the end of the ninth year, school of some kind is necessary to support and, so to say, objectify the child's religious experience. The home still takes the lead, but school comes in to corroborate and to reinforce, and to broaden the basis of the child's religious experience. Nothing that it is in a teacher's heart to impart is lost upon the child in the Day School. But the Sunday School, with its essential Primary Department, probably counts for more.

A very distinguished teacher has called these years of childhood the period of the "birth of a character." Quite distinctly, it may be a period of religious choice, amounting almost to religious decision; in some cases—though perhaps not normally—actually amounting to religious decision. An attachment may be forged between the soul of the child and Jesus Christ which no after experience will ever completely sunder.

Evidently, it will be a help to us to know as intimately as we can the heart and mind of the child during these years. Psychologically speaking, two features are in the foreground. (1) The enjoyment of the world in its rich and varied appeal to his sense-powers the child has carried forward in an intensified form from his "infant" years. Sights, sounds, people, behaviours—in actual experience or as idealised in

picture and story—enter into the child's growing conception of the world he lives in, enter absorbingly and quickeningly. The richer and the more filled with the beautiful the appeal is the better. (2) The wonder-impulse being now also, relatively speaking, at its height, the world—the one world, seen and unseen—becomes naturally to him God's wonder-world. He enjoys the Book of Revelation; and he understands it better than the average grown-up person does. The Bible, as he knows and loves it, is his Wonder Picture Book. Religion need not be separately defined or specialised for the child. It is a natural interpretive light which illumines all his experience, casting the halo of higher glory about the things that excite his wonder.

The essence of a child's religion lies in his openness to the wonders of the Divine, and in an intuitive understanding and instinctive acceptance of these wonders as Divine. The world, if so regarded by those about him, easily becomes God's world to him; peopled with angels as well as men; glorified by all that he knows about Jesus Christ. It was not by accident that it was Christ Who first really called the world's attention to the freshness and fulness of the child's mind and heart and spirit—filled with the very life and glory of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Though it is well thus to emphasise the naturalness of religion and its meaning in terms of the tender and beauty-loving instincts of childhood; we need to remember not only that wonder merges into reverence and awe, and thus becomes worship, but also that awe and the reverence which the Old Testament describes as "the fear of the LORD" may be awakened independently.

The thunderstorm has to be reckoned with no less than the flower; the wind that tears up the trees no less than the birds that nest in them. The greatness and the might of God, whom *somehow* these phenomena also reveal, make His loving kindness more wonderful to the child, and to us all. But one deliberately says less on this point, because there is so real a danger of our touching upon the grandeur of God, in which His might and His beauty are blended, with too little care. There is a risk (of which those who have observed how prone some religious workers are to use the Divine Name glibly, and even in humorous connections, will be aware) that the holiest and the highest should lose its awesomeness for us by familiarity. Once let a child hear a "religious joke," and no amount of teaching from the same lips can ever efface its ill effects; nor can the same lips pick up the thread of religious teaching with the same unmarred effect, whether the child hears the joke or not. Since, then, it is easier to be true to ourselves when we are discovering to children the naturalness and the kindliness of Christ and of God, as Christ and nature and human love reveal Him, it is well for all concerned that it is this aspect of the Divine which fits the impulses and meets the inward hungers of childhood.

(2) Our whole being with all its powers does not wake up at once. The life unfolds. Boyhood and girlhood, say, between the ages of nine and thirteen, differ considerably from childhood. Not because they "put away" any of childhood's native impulses, but because they add new impulses to them. Intellect, the thought-powers of the mind, are rushing healthily to the

fore. To go on massing experiences would create confusion. The period of sorting out impressions and of the *quest of truth,* accordingly, has dawned. We have passed from the period of the "birth of a character" to the period of the "nourishment of a character."

The first ingredients of faith have already appeared in the child's eager acceptance of experience, and in his wonder at the wonderful. But there are other ingredients in full-grown faith. And the way of these is prepared, and the beginning made in boyhood. For faith has to be "the proving of things not seen," the offspring of clear judgment concerning what is highest. Hence, the boy's instinct for reality, for the positive truth of things, and for the play of his own intellect in the forming of opinions, is a vital phase in the unfolding of the religious consciousness. To the boy, the Bible is a book of the actual. He needs to meet with its real men, its real places, its real meanings. First and best of all, his Bible study needs to be the basis for opinions which he by the light of his own acute judgment—acute because so little overlaid—can arrive at as *his own.*

If the child comes naturally to Jesus and to God by ways of the heart, ways of trust and gratitude and affection and sympathy, the boy (9 or 10 to 13) comes more naturally by ways of thought and judgment. Without excluding the play of affection, to him Christ and God appeal as the Supreme Truth. The most convincing token we have of this is in the one recorded scene from the boyhood of Jesus; a scene which more than one great artist—with what inadequacy they would

be the first to confess—has striven to reproduce. Wonder and reverence are still there. This is seen in those mysterious words: "the things of My Father!" But most conspicuously, the impulse which caused the boy Jesus to remain behind and the centre of the scene as a whole are in the words: "They found Him sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers." This one glimpse of the ideally typical boyhood of Jesus, shows us the natural attitude of mind and spirit between "childhood" and the "teens." It is the birth-moment intellectually speaking, of sound judgment; in the religious life, it is the natural birth-moment of a strong, clear faith. Lest one should be misunderstood, this does not mean that we must *tell* the boy what to believe. On the contrary, we must place facts before him. Approach a parable as a "puzzle-story" (ages 9 to 11), or a "problem-story" (ages 11 to 13), of which we have to find the meaning. Similarly, with many passages and lesson stories in the Bible. And let him, by learning to judge for himself, learn *how* to believe. That is the vital matter at this stage. And this the boy or girl between nine and thirteen is ready for.

(3) From boyhood and girlhood the unfolding life passes on to the stage of adolescence. Before the youth in his "teens" life and the world open out as an arena, wherein he feels that he is called upon to play his part. This is the period for the "exercise of a character." *Now* the uppermost note is the wistful,—the wistful and the practical. Life appeals to youth's craving to be and to his will to be. He is conscious—more deeply

than we commonly allow—of life's two ways. His discovery of his power of choice and of responsibility for his own decision is accompanied by a keen sense of the fatefulness of his own choosing. When he would do good, evil, he finds, is ever present with him. It is a battle for the dear fellow. Every breaking of the Divine law leaves its scar, its consciousness of severance. No fall is for him a "fall upwards!" His heart craves restoration and harmony. Though he may not as yet (save in rare cases) be conscious of the power of God or of Christ to bear him through the fight, he is conscious of the need for coming back, and of the fact of coming back, into a state of forgiveness. This is, as perhaps with most of us, his experience of conversion—the restoration of broken harmony; an experience which may be many times repeated before we arrive at that fuller experience and Higher Conversion, the experience of the power of Christ "to keep us from falling, and at last to present us faultless."

What a memorable Sunday morning was that, when, unable owing to heavy snow to reach his own church in time, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a youth of fifteen, turned into a Primitive Methodist Chapel! No minister arrived. One of the few laymen present spoke. He spoke awkwardly enough, to all outward seeming. There was little in his ten or twelve minutes' sermon but the text, *Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;* and the application, which was directly addressed to young Spurgeon. "Young man, you look very miserable. And you always will be miserable if you do not obey my text. Young man, look to Jesus! Look, look, *look.*" Says Spurgeon, "I did, and, then

and there, the cloud was gone. I could have risen on the instant and sung with the most enthusiastic of them . . . Oh, that somebody had told me before!" Let any one of us just tell that story to a class of thoughtful youths in their early "teens." It will have its effect. It points the way of a decision for which many at that age are ready. And if we could but follow it up a little later with a persuasion to listen to the Divine Voice that speaks within every one of us, taking Socrates and Marcus Aurelius, if you will, for examples as well as selections from numberless Biblical instances; we shall have introduced them not only to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour but of the Holy Spirit as Guide and Strengthener. (Cf. Isa. xxx. 21; Prov. iii. 6; St. John xiv. 26.)

It is a critical period. Somewhere about twelve and somewhere about sixteen are marked out as youth's moments of decision. Conversion is "a natural phenomenon of adolescence." During this period failure is poignantly felt. Now, if at any time, the instinct of fear, purified from its weaker phases (albeit even so sometimes serviceable), enters directly into the religious consciousness; the fear to lose life's better possibilities, the fear of the lash of conscience, the fear attendant upon the sense of responsibility and of incurring penalty through sin. It is a moment of the heart's natural hunger for Christ.

And few are those in the early adolescent years who do not know that Christ is *the* One who, if they stand with Him, can decide the issue for them, and give them victory. "In working class districts," said Mr. C. E. B. Russell, in his book on *Manchester Boys,* and

none knew them better, "instances are not at all rare where the close friendship of two boys is based not only upon a natural liking one for the other, but upon a common wish to pursue an ideal which they may but partly realise, a perfection which they never hope to reach, yet do not abandon. They represent this ideal, seldom indeed in explicit utterance, but quite clearly and consciously by the name of Jesus Christ." Whilst, as another says, "the years between twelve and fifteen often witness a deepening of the boy's religious experiences; whilst he begins to realise more vividly the gulf between things as they are and things as they ought to be," the hopeful words of Canon J. M. Wilson, when headmaster of Clifton, hold good: "We possess the ear of a boy during all those years when his aspirations rise highest, when reverence is most natural, when goodness and greatness are most inspiring."

We cannot here, even if one had oneself the vision, pursue the unfolding of so rich and profound a reality as the religious life in all its bearings; nor, indeed, more than touch upon the course of religious development as—were it free and in every way helped—it would naturally manifest itself in childhood, boyhood, and youth. Nor must the brevity with which one writes be allowed to give the faintest impression of watertight periods of unfolding. Growth is always both reminiscent and anticipative. All that has ever entered constructively into our life at any stage goes forward with us. Wonder, thoughtfulness, the chivalrous impulse to choose Christ as the Captain of our warfare, once awakened "perish never." As for the antici-

pativeness which belongs to growth, there is always a foregleam within the life of that next and larger thing which is to be: a foregleam in childhood of boyhood, a foregleam in boyhood of youth, and so on. And he alone really deals with the unfolding life helpfully and inspiringly who keeps the vision—not of child, boy, youth, as they appear before us merely, but also of the greater things already astir, of the life that is in the making. In religious education this is pre-eminently important. For the very spirit of religion is a going on to possess rather than a possessing; an achieving rather than an achievement; a "growth in grace" rather than a "state of grace."

Just enough has been written to suggest that religious development does more than run alongside of our normal development; that, in an absolute sense, it *is* our normal development. There are beautiful words of F. W. Robertson's in his sermon on *The Early Development of Jesus.* To recall them may sum up the spirit of what has been here so imperfectly written. "First religion is a kind of instinct; and if a child does not exhibit strong religious sensibilities, if he seem heedless, untouched by awe or serious thoughts, still it is wiser not to interfere. He may be still at home with God . . . Very mysterious, and beautiful, and wonderful, is God's communing with the unconscious soul before reflection comes. . . . Our second life is reflective. There is a moment when the life spontaneous passes into the life reflective. Those are fearful, solitary moments. The soul first meets God alone. So with Jacob when he saw the dream-ladder: so with Samuel when the Voice called him: so with Christ. So

with every son of man. God visits the soul in secrecy, in silence, and in solitariness. And the danger and duty of a teacher is twofold. 1st. To avoid hastening that feeling, hurrying that crisis-moment, which some call conversion. 2nd. To avoid crushing it. . . . When God comes to the heart, and His presence is shown by thoughtfulness, and seriousness, and distaste to common business, and loneliness, and solitary musings, and a certain tone of melancholy, straightway we set ourselves to expostulate, to rebuke, to cheer, to prescribe amusement and gaieties, as the cure for seriousness which seems out of place. Some of us have seen that tried; and, more fearful still, seen it succeed. And we have watched the still, small voice of God in the soul silenced. And we have seen the spirit of the world get its victim back again. . . . And they that loved him did it."

Chapter VI

THE PROBLEM OF CHILD CONVERSION

ALBERT D. BELDEN, B.D.

The Christian Churches have passed during the last generation or so through a strong reaction against the idea of Child-Conversion. One of its earliest expressions was Horace Bushnell's great work "Christian Nurture," a book still worth careful reading. Bushnell's contention was that the children of our Christian homes should grow up, or rather, be nurtured up, insensibly into Christ. They should never know the time when they were not Christian. Any critical choice on their part should be to go out from the Church rather than to come in. In this way he believed that the Church could by sheer Christian nature "outpopulate" the world. Bushnell complained that current revivalistic methods made nothing of the family or the Church, treating even the children of Christian parents as though "they were so many Melchisedecs in their religious nature, only not righteous at all—without father or mother, without descent."

This protest was justified largely by the harsh and condemnatory attitude of much of the Evangelicism of the period towards the child. Whilst, however, we may agree to a certain value in his point of view as compared with the somewhat crude and ultra-adult child-evan-

gelism that called forth his protest, yet a good deal of water has flown under the bridge since then, and the rise of modern psychology has prepared the way for a more comprehensive view of the subject.

THE UNSULLIED LIFE

There is scarcely a problem of more poignant interest for Christian people than this one. Every true parent knows the unutterable yearning of the father-mother-heart over the moral and spiritual destiny of its offspring. "What shall this child be?" is the constant refrain of thought in the true Child-Lover whether he be priest or minister, teacher or parent. Great as may be the achievement of turning an adult sinner from his drunkenness or profligacy to a new life in Christ, it is not the supreme Christian achievement. Greater far is it so to lead, so to influence, the innocent child that it is brought through to decided, consecrated, Christian manhood or womanhood unsullied and unspoiled. No one can deny that this is the supreme thing to accomplish—prevention is better than cure—the conservation of the whole life for Christ is better than the reclamation of a part, especially of a part depreciated in value by the consequences of sin. The present writer stresses this valuation because the apathy still existent in the Churches with regard to the Christian nurture of child-life is very gross, being due of course to the unconscious bias and prejudice of the adult-mind in favour of adult interests. If once the vision of the successful Conservation of the total Childhood of the Church in this generation laid hold upon the mind of the Christian

Community as a whole, there would be such a leap forward in interest and achievement as would provide a new and startling era of Christian witness. In large measure the findings of modern psychology encourage us to hope for a success of this magnitude, for they are unveiling in a dramatic and convincing way both the urgent need of child-life for religion and the deeper instinctive movements of the child-soul towards the appropriate satisfaction for its need.

FROM ONE EXTREME TO ANOTHER

The opposition to the idea of Child-conversion has been due in large measure to reaction against the Puritan and Calvinistic view of the child as being "born in sin" and "totally depraved" by reason of its relation to Adam, and needing in its nature, therefore, a more or less violent wrench away from sin. This violent or dramatic right-about-face was its conversion. Undoubtedly the doctrine tended to produce its own appropriate results. *Children are born sub-conscious imitators,* and they soak up the mental and emotional atmospheres of their adult society as sponges soak up water. Being so taught, therefore, and being surrounded by such religious expectancy, with vivid examples of adult conversions of this type constantly brought to their notice or present in the thought and feeling about them, it is not surprising that they themselves frequently responded in just this way and presented instances of child-conversation accompanied by great emotional upheaval and convulsion and often considerable mental torture and strain. Whatever view domi-

nates the adult mind, because of the atmosphere it creates, tends to reflect itself in the actual experience of the children. Similarly, in the modern absence of belief in convulsion conversion, such changes amongst the children seldom occur even when methods that assume them are used, the reason being that there is no longer exerted upon the minds of the children the pressure of a real belief in such stormy ideas. Unfortunately, however, we have swung so far in the opposite direction that we are in grave peril of so idealising the child-nature as to expect nothing in the shape of a religious crisis. We tend to make the process now so placid and so uneventful that issues are blunted and blurred, and what should be a critical and essentially romantic blossoming of the child's spiritual powers is left all too often at a very dull and trivial level of experience. If it is possible for souls to become Christian so gradually, so uneventfully, that they hardly know when or where they pass the rubicon, and could scarcely tell you at any one time if they have "arrived" or not, surely something vital in the perspective of Christian experience is lacking. This is the danger that threatens us—the peril of a colourless discipleship.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHILD

What is the truth as to the moral condition of the child? The view of modern psychology is that the child is born neither good nor evil, but with a capacity for either. To begin with the infant is a delightful little animal, non-moral but differing from all other animals in the sacred potentialities of moral and spiritual being

that it possesses. Two mighty Shadows bend above its cradle prepared to distil themselves in sublime or awful baptism. The one is the Shadow of the world—blended of Adult Character on the one hand—the result of the accumulated wrong choices of the past—and Environing Social Institutions in so far as they are unchristian on the other. This is the Shadow of Original Sin—a shadow that pursues us not only in the form of Heredity, but much more in our Social Inheritance. The other is the Shadow of the Almighty and the All-Good. If Original Sin is a terrible fact, Original Goodness is a greater fact. This greater fact has also its twofold human channel in the accumulated good choices of the past and in environing social institutions in so far as they are Christian. This Shadow, however, attends us in a threefold form. Heredity, Social Inheritance, and *in Person*—the ever-brooding Holy Spirit of God.

Now the individual child follows in general the line of development of the race itself. First, then, comes the animal-existence, the principle of which is predominantly that of Self-Preservation developing to an intense degree the custom or ethic of Self-Preference. This condition in Man would seem to be the climax of God's purpose in Nature which is obviously to produce the Individualised Soul—the clearly outlined self-conscious Ego. As Benjamin Kidd has shown us so clearly in his "Science of Power" the struggle for self is "the law of individual growth." Consequently—and Providentially—the first decade of a child's life is essentially a self-regarding period. Says one authority concerning the years one to six—"It is the animal, the

egoistic feelings, those that arise and end in the child's physical and animal nature, that are central." And, again, "The instinctive feelings of hunger and thirst, of pain and pleasure, of curiosity and wonder, of selfishness and cruelty, fear and anger, are prominent." If this is true no wonder our forefathers were misled about the child-nature when contrasting it with Christian character. They did not realise as we do that this is an inheritance from the level of Nature, and, what is more, a necessary inheritance if the soul is to become as strongly individualised as a truly moral life demands. It is by this very means that the child comes to that condition so aptly expressed by Tennyson in "In Memoriam":

> "But as he grows he gathers much
> And learns the use of 'I' and 'Me'
> And finds 'I am not what I see'
> And other than the things I touch.
>
> So rounds he to a separate mind
> From whence clear memory may begin
> As thro' the frame that binds him in
> His isolation grows defined."

CONVERSION AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON

Now, if we allow modern psychology to continue our story of the development of the child-soul it will begin at this point to speak in terms that approach very near to those of Christian Evangelism. It advises us that as the adolescent stage begins, from the age of ten onwards, there is a natural conversion of the child-mind away from this predominant interest in it-

self to an awakening interest in others. Should the child be under the influence of altruistic or Christian teaching such a change is likely to be accelerated and rendered more permanent. Now, whilst Psychology as a science does not presume to utter a verdict upon the relationship of this change to Religion, there are certain schools of psychological thought that would explain this change as being due merely to those bodily developments which shape the life for its social purposes of sex and reproduction. They would go on to explain the outburst of religious interest that often accompanies the change as due in the main to the transference of energy from the necessarily repressed sex-instinct. Religion is one of the main forms under which the sex-instinct becomes "sublimated"—that is directed towards a more sublime end. Mr. Chapman Cohen presents this type of interpretation, with a distinct bias against religion, rather elaborately in his "Religion and Sex." It is, however, an interpretation which begs the question at issue, for it leaves untouched all consideration of whether a higher directive force is necessary behind that sublimation if it is to carry with it a harmonising of the whole personality.

HIGHER INSTINCTS FOR HIGHER DESTINY

Infinitely preferable is the interpretation offered by a Christian Psychology—such as is represented by Prof. Mackenzie's excellent little book on "Modern Psychology and Christian Personality," which interprets this movement in the child-soul as being the expression of an instinct more radical than any of

the instincts common to man and the animal world. Just as a person travelling in a lift rises to a level at which the wealth of other departments lie open to him, so humanity, rising from the animal level, finds itself registering the pressure of new and richer instincts. These new and vaster instincts are three in number: Self-Hood or Individuality, Reason and Conscience, and they represent the pressure of a New Order of Divine Life—they are higher instincts for higher destiny.

It is impossible, and would be inappropriate, in the scope of this chapter to survey the total issue between religion and psychology but it may suffice to indicate briefly that in acquiescing, as it does, in the absolute and urgent need for the "sublimation" of our animal-instincts, the materialistic school of psychology gives away its case against religion. For religion is notoriously the most successful of all sublimating powers. Yet, if religion be emptied of reality—if belief in its objective validity is discredited—how shall this urgent need for sublimation be met? Psychology is in danger of accompanying its analysis of the human mind with such bias as to bring the highest operations of that mind to a standstill like the small boy who breaks the works of his watch and then complains that it doesn't tell him the time.

THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

The facts are not denied; they are as science states; it is the interpretation of the facts that makes all the difference. To the average mind it would seem

peculiarly providential that, just when so devastating a passion as the sex-instinct—and one so capable of being turned to essentially selfish ends—is rising into power in the child's experience, a deeper instinct for others, and, therefore, for the supreme Other, should come into evidence as a restraining and guiding force. It does not seem extravagant, nor can it be judged unscientific, to speak of this as the Overshadowing of the young life by Divine Grace, by the Holy Spirit of God. Certainly we cannot fail to see how this striking and fundamental change in the child-soul *approximates to the typical Conversion of the Christian Gospel.* From Self to Others—from Self-Preservation to Self-Sacrifice, from the service of one's own interest to that service of God which is found in the service of humanity even to "the least of these my brethren"—this is the Great Change that wells up from God through Nature, and that Jesus Christ lived and died and reigns to make finally secure in the souls of men.

Imagine a plant meant to climb a very high trellis being started some little distance from it, at the foot of a stake thrust in the ground. Round and round the stake it grows, but at last it flings *a wider sweep of tendril* and lays hold upon the trellis. Attached to the trellis, it begins a new life of richer scope. Had it failed of attachment to the trellis, it would have speedily exhausted the stake and its life have been stunted and spoiled. So the child-soul grows first along the line of self-regarding individualism. This is permitted in the hope that the child will carry a strong individuality into the wider movement yet to

come, when it shall attach itself to the new and limitless line of altruism and the love of God.

To envisage this movement of God in the Child-Soul—to realise that it is present in some degree in every child—is a great gain for the evangelist. If it explains the success of even crude and mischievous methods in the past, it holds promise of an enormous harvest for the evangelism that at last understands.

The investigators into this matter conducted by such expert Christian psychologists as Dr. Starbuck and Professor George Coe are by this time familiar in the Churches, and the impressive statistics they have collected may be studied in their well-known volumes.

The general result arrived at in these investigations is that of the cases of conversion dealt with, 75 per cent. occurred between the ages of 12 and 20, and that there is a strong grouping of cases around the periods 12-13, 16-17, and 19-20.

It has been suggested that too much can be made of the connection between adolescence and conversion, on the ground that the doctrine of conversion has in the past derived its strongest support from men of the type of St. Paul, John Wesley, or George Fox, who were not converted till later in life. Whilst we may agree that Dr. Starbuck is too pessimistic when he says that "if conversion has not occurred before 20 the chances are small that it will ever be experienced" we must nevertheless bear in mind the fact that it is not until recent years—a period marked by the growth of the Sunday School movement—that the religious experiences of the adolescent have been taken very

seriously. Doubtless an enquiry into the condition of men like Wesley and Fox during adolescence would bear out the emphasis placed upon this period by modern psychology. The present writer, however, desires humbly to offer some personal judgments upon this matter. In a recently held meeting of some twenty Free Church ministers each one present told briefly the story of his critical awakening or conversion to the religious life. The result was a striking confirmation of the importance of adolescence. The average age of such experiences was 14 years, and strong emphasis was placed in a number of cases upon "second awakenings," so much so that the interesting suggestion was made that doubtless certain types are converted in stages. Every experienced Christian knows how strangely, even sadly, possible it is always to find some greater depth, some further degree yet to go, in personal surrender to God. This fact tends to corroborate a further finding of modern psychology to the effect that sudden ebullitions of critical and emotional religious change are, as it were, wave-crests of a movement that is much more prolonged than it appears to be. Mr. R. H. Thouless in his excellent "Introduction to the Psychology of Religion," borrowing a phrase from Dr. Jung, describes this movement as "unconscious incubation," and says, "We seem able to give an adequate account of this (adult conversion) by assuming the presence of a growing sentiment kept unconscious by a resistance, which finally overthrows that resistance and establishes itself in a dominant position in the conscious life." Now is there not here, in this conception of the relation between sub-

conscious and conscious elements of the conversion experience, a twofold suggestion of great value? First, it suggests very strongly that the climacteric periods of youthful conversion already noticed, have also been preceded by "unconscious incubation," that indeed they may be late in their arrival because this deeper process in the soul has lacked attention. Secondly, it suggests that the chief difference between what we may call religious awakening or gradual conversion and decisive or critical conversion is due not to any difference in their inherent spiritual value, but simply to the degree and character of resistances due to the moral and spiritual experiences of childhood or due purely to temperament and type.

It is the present writer's strong conviction that in dealing with the children we are continually a year or so *too late*. He believes that the ages referred to as climacteric are so because they represent cases which have occurred in the absence of a scientific precision in this matter. They represent the old haphazard "hit or miss" evangelism. The well-known reserve that settles down upon the adolescent—due to his difficulty in understanding himself and the failure of adults to enlighten him—causes him to hide much of his secret eager interest in religion. The rise of the gang-instinct too, tends to make him conform to the type in possession, viz., the reserved misunderstood type outwardly nonchalant in regard to religion. In other words, we are faced with the vicious circle of youth uninstructed in sex becoming reserved and hiding its deeper feelings, and in its turn creating a fashion of such reserve amongst fresh adolescents as they arrive.

Yet God has woven into the very physical structure of youth the evidence of the true high-tide of the spirit. *The physical change strikes the hour* for not only does religion then become a most urgent need, but the mind instinctively grows tender to its reception. The age of puberty should be the age at which the Christian influences of Home and Church should move harmoniously to their appointed climax in the definite acceptance by the Child-Soul of its Saviour.

INFERENCES AS TO METHOD

From the foregoing facts there are certain indications as to the method of our evangelism of the children. Remembering the old dictum "forced development at one stage means arrested development at a later" we shall beware of subjecting children of tender pre-adolescent years to the challenge for decision. Bearing in mind also the pressure of the herd-instinct upon the adolescent we shall beware of inducing adolescents to take public action which may be the merest imitation of older example. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that if Conversion is as we have defined it—*the movement of the highly Individualised Soul away from its own self-centre to free alliance with Others in and with God*—it must be essentially the act of an *individual,* and the soul's full responsibility must be fostered and mustered as completely as possible.

This does not mean that public evangelism of adolescents is a mistake. We have no more right to deprive youth of the inspiration and constraint of com-

mon human feeling than any other age, but it does mean that the approach to decision should be of a personal and private rather than a public kind. It is a real injury to the child-soul to hurry it to a premature decision from which it must inevitably react. Whereas, if the child is carried *in his whole self* into a decision the poles of which he clearly visualises, with time for reflection and with the emphasis placed, by such a method, upon the dignity of his self-hood in relation to God, such a decision can hardly fail to be final and permanent.

This means, of course, that the conversion of the child is to be in the main the work, under God, of its parents, its teachers, its minister—the occasional evangelist fitting himself into the work they have done with the utmost discretion. We must insist that parents are deeply responsible for the spiritual salvation of their children. If the confidence of the child is to be retained in the years of adolescence, there must be wisely graded sex-instruction—nothing else can prevent the cloud of reserve descending upon their relationship. Parents need to be advised that a wealth of reward in affection and trust awaits their discharge of this sacred stewardship.

Beyond the parents the Sunday School or Bible Class teacher and the Pastor have their place, and with this threefold influence well harmonised it ought to be possible to bring *every child* in the Church to its Golden Hour with God. This means keeping careful watch on all the adolescents of our Christian Communities—letting none slip through these years unguided and unshepherded. The evangelist may think

that this leaves little place for him, but that is not so. We need very badly preachers to adolescents who can convey the true religious atmosphere in a really powerful way. Their work is to stimulate, to clarify and to interpret the workings of these new Divine impulses towards Otherness in the soul of youth. We gather our adolescents for their own specific forms of worship all too seldom and study their needs in this way all too little. There will always be room for the specialist preacher to the young. But the harvest is best reaped, blade by blade, plant by plant, and if possible by those whose relationship to the child is confidential and more permanent.

THE SENSE OF SIN

One last question remains. Little has been said in the foregoing about that sense of sin which has always been assumed traditionally to accompany Christian Conversion. Yet surely never was there a greater fallacy than to imagine that folk become sensible of sin simply by being told that they are sinful. To argue direct from Biblical statement to the child-mind that it must as a matter of duty consider itself sinful is artificial in the extreme. The lives of hosts of our Christian Children are sublimely innocent of wilful sin. The inherent selfishness of the animal-nature is eventually challenged by the rise of the social-instinct, and this by its presentation of a new ideal at once precipitates the sense of sin. This can be assumed as a constant factor in the adolescent though its intensity may differ. But over and above this a certain tendency to shame results from the strain and stress of sex-

interest and control. Indeed, the deep sense of unworthiness and depression that afflicts the adolescent calls rather for our sympathy and aid than for our exploitation in the interests of a theological tradition. If the Christian Ideal is plainly enough presented *the sense of sin will take care of itself*. Moreover, if the sense of sin is interpreted, as it should be, as being the shadow cast upon the imperfect by the Perfect, the pressure of the Divine upon the human, then it will be encouraged and not discouraged and made a means of blessing and not an obstruction.

In conclusion, let us affirm that there are evidently three periods in life when the human soul in its natural orbit swings full into the rays of the Sun of our Souls. First, when childhood breaks into Youth and with the rise of the Other-regarding instincts yearns for the supreme and Perfect Other. Secondly, when Youth breaks into Manhood and Womanhood and the soul yearns to find the Best Life for itself and those it loves. Thirdly, when Manhood and Womanhood cross the line between Middle-Life and Age—when thoughts of lost opportunity and judgment lie heavily on the soul and when strange yearnings for deeper change and final salvation are felt.

It is well if the Church has its message and its gift of Divine power for the human soul in these later periods—or at any time in between when the struggle between Good and Evil in the soul sinks below the surface. But best of all is it to persuade the soul in its first great visitation to fulfil its destiny of dedication and to taste, at the Divinely appointed hour, the ineffable joy of responsible conscious union with its Maker and its God.

Chapter VII

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AS AN EVANGELISING AGENCY

ERNEST H. HAYES

From its very nature and purpose, the Sunday School should be the most fruitful evangelising agency connected with the Church. Imagine for a moment the Church stripped of the young life that gathers in and around its Sunday School, and then estimate its chances of soul-winning in the community! Or cut out from the membership roll of the Church those members who have been recruited directly through the evangelistic work of the Sunday School, and the remnant would be both weak and small.

The fact is that, to a degree rarely comprehended by the leaders of the Church, the Sunday School side of its work is vital to its very existence. Under its charter the School gathers about sixty per cent. of the children of the land within its walls week by week for religious instruction, and it requires no great exercise of the imagination to grasp the enormous field for evangelising the country offered by the School. Further, the fact that on an average seventy-five per cent. of the Sunday scholars come from homes not otherwise connected with any form of organised Christianity, has an important bearing on this subject.

If it is conceded that the School gathers and trains

the children for the Church, the next point for investigation is the extent to which the average School is functioning properly as an evangelising agency. This question is often asked to-day by critics of the graded method of Sunday School teaching, like the one who wrote to a religious paper recently asking for any direct testimony as to whether "there are more conversions among the little ones." We must at the outset dissociate ourselves from those who measure the success of a Sunday School by the standards of the successful evangelist among adults. The time has gone by, surely, when enthusiastic but misguided ministers or school officers seek to organise an "earnest united effort to secure the *conversion* of the whole school." A record of such an effort, carried through some years ago in a school of three hundred members, deserves mention here as an example of a negative kind.* In this case the minister and superintendent put a "wholesale conversion" scheme before the teachers.

"After a few Sabbaths' teaching to this end the minister said, standing in the pulpit after the opening exercises: 'If any of the pupils desire to become Christians, let them come to these vacant seats at my right.' I bowed my head to ask that some would come, but the prayer was never offered, for the sound as of an army marching was heard, and I raised my head just as the Pastor said (seeing almost the entire school upon their feet) 'Remain where you are; we will come to you.' I shall never forget that afternoon. The Sabbath School convened at 2.30, and we were kept

* Reported in the *Christian Herald,* April 16, 1913.

working with each one individually, till nearly time for evening service. I believe that story could be duplicated in many a Sabbath School, if only the right means were employed and officers and teachers were all brought to feel their responsibility."

Knowing the gregarious instincts of children we can be quite certain that the last sentence in this report is perfectly accurate. We have seen children of four and five trooping into an enquiry room when once a move has been made in that direction by other children, like lambs following a flock. Any preacher or teacher who dares to use the ordinary appeals to urgent penitence, with denunciation of gross sins, and threats of Divine anger, that are the stock-in-trade of the missioner to adults, can get the above results at any time in any Sunday School session.

But apart from the outrage to child nature of such methods, it can easily be demonstrated that there is little, if any, gain to the Church that makes such use of its Sunday School. Not only the teaching of modern psychology, but practical experience gained from the new methods of religious education, compel us to revise our tests and find a new standard of evangelism in Sunday School work. Since we are forced to the conviction that "child conversion," as the term is commonly understood, is not only unnatural but unscriptural, we must seek other and better ways of making use of the Sunday School as an organisation for winning the children for Christ. In brief, we have to substitute an educational evangelism, based on the natural religion of a child, for an evangelism of conversion based on the experience of an adult.

Fortunately, we are not taking a leap into the dark, nor trying out a novel theory, when we urge a policy of educational evangelism. Ever since the founding of Christian homes by Christian parents, this method has been tried and found successful—in other words, educational evangelism is as old as Christianity itself. It is the New Testament way of *Winning the Children for Christ.* Although St. Paul claimed Timothy as his son in Christ, it is clear from his letter to his beloved disciple that he recognised that the foundations of character had been laid for Timothy by his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. St. Augustine has told us in his "Confessions" how he drank in the name of Jesus with his mother's milk, with the result that at its best the world could never satisfy him.

Henry Ward Beecher has placed on record that "more than any recognised influence of my father or my mother upon me, more than the social influence of all the members of my father's household; more, so far as I can trace it, or so far as I am made aware of it, than all the social influences of every kind, Christ has had the formation of my mind and of my disposition. My hidden ideals of what is beautiful I have drawn from Christ. My thoughts of what is manly and noble and pure have almost all of them arisen from the Lord Jesus Christ . . . whenever there has been the necessity for it, I have sought—and at last almost spontaneously—to throw myself into the companionship of Christ; and early, by my imagination, I could see Him standing and looking quietly and lovingly on me." *

* "Sermons by Henry Ward Beecher," vol. 1.

Beecher's experience takes us to the very heart of educational evangelism. Not by any sudden "right-about-face" as of a prodigal in the far country turning back to God, does a child become Christian, but by a gradual unfolding of the mind and heart. The experience of countless Christians, nurtured in the atmosphere of Christian homes, demonstrates to us how all the wealth of a developing personality can be captivated by Jesus Christ when He is truly presented to the quick imagination and warm affection of the child.

We suggest that the true function of the Sunday School is to provide that spiritual atmosphere and religious training that its scholars have missed through not having the priceless privilege of being born into a Christian home. In other words, in the same way that many children from Christian homes naturally develop such a Christian character that they cannot definitely point to any time or place for their "conversion," so under good teaching in a right atmosphere our Sunday scholars can be won for Christ by an educational evangelism.

Let no one be frightened or prejudiced by that word "educational." A method is not made less spiritual because it is educational. Jesus used the educational method of the parable and the paradox in all His teaching, and it was by an educational evangelism that He trained His first disciples until, by what we call to-day a "training question," He led Peter to discover for himself that illuminating truth that found expression in the glowing confession, "Thou art the Christ."

The graded Sunday School, with its insistence on a spiritual atmosphere and its demand that training

in worship shall be included in its curriculum, has a genius for winning the children for Christ in a way both natural and Scriptural. The ungraded school cuts directly across child nature, and is therefore fighting to win the child for Christ with one arm tied behind its back. The problems of disorder, inattention and unproductive teaching that face the worker in ungraded schools, indicate how much that school is handicapped as an evangelising agency. It follows, therefore, that a first and long step towards success in winning the child is to grade the school, and by adopting the new methods make it a training ground for worship.*

The use of graded lessons that present Jesus to the child in a fresh and developing light at each stage of its development, will do wonders in training the child for a Christian life. In a modern Primary department we find that the child will artlessly declare, "I love Jesus," without a tinge of priggish self-consciousness or artificial piety. No wonder that when such a child was asked by an evangelist of the old type "How long have you loved Him?" she replied, in open-eyed astonishment at such a senseless question. "Why, ever since I have known about Him, of course."

The Junior boy and girl will quite naturally make Jesus their hero when our Master is rightly presented to this hero-worshipping and might-admiring stage of development. Thus when educational evangelism is properly worked out through the Junior Department, we often find that about the eleventh birthday there

* See *The Child in the Midst*, by Ernest H. Hayes, for a fuller treatment of the point, also *Children's Worship*.

comes a religious crisis in the scholar when quite spontaneously Jesus will be chosen as the hero who outtops the crowd of heroes who command the adoration of children of this age. In many cases this dedication of the life to Jesus the Hero may become a permanent decision if the work of the Intermediate Department builds four-square on this foundation. With the coming of adolescence, with its craving for ideals, the wise teacher can present Jesus as the life ideal, with the result that scholars in their teens may be led to follow in the steps of Henry Ward Beecher and find their hidden ideals in Christ as he did.

This brief and cursory survey of the graded Sunday School will indicate how an educational evangelism can be worked out by a method within reach of every School. This should enable us to look for the same results from the children of worldly parents that we may expect from those in Christian homes—for a Divine Providence has ordained that environment shall have greater power in a developing life than heredity. But how can one hour a week in Sunday School counteract the doubtful influence of a worldly home? The question will be asked, and it is a fair one. Much can be done by the concentrated work of the Sunday School session, but this must of course be followed up by catering for the spiritual and physical well-being of the scholars during the week, and by the unsparing service of the teacher. We can no longer call in the services of a special missioner to work up an emotional crisis that will secure the sudden "conversion" of the scholar as a kind of reward for the regular work of the teacher. Therefore we must aim to secure that

every teacher becomes a soul-winner, not only by his lesson in the Sunday School, but by living the Christian life during the week, in the company of his scholars as often as may be.

It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the point that the teacher's intimacy with his scholars fits him, under the Holy Spirit's blessing, to be the most successful type of evangelist that the Church can ever entrust with soul-winning work.

It has been urged that a general policy of educational evangelism cannot entirely take the place of the older method of special missions or campaigns. It must be admitted that under any system there is always a peril lest the golden hour for decision be allowed to pass without a definite choice being made. It has always been recognised as a weakness in Sunday School work that minister, superintendent and teacher have each left it to the other to secure the conversion or, as we prefer to call it, the dedication, of the scholars to Jesus Christ. To guard against this, many earnest teachers have welcomed the observance of Decision Day as an annual campaign for decision. Others have adopted the plan of using the scholar's birthday as an appropriate item for broaching the all-important question. In some schools the annual Children's Day or School Anniversary has been made the occasion for a special appeal to the older scholars to make the great surrender.

Critics of these times and seasons for decision have argued that every day should be Decision Day, and that every lesson should have as its climax an earnest personal appeal for decision, whatever the subject may

be. Other critics contend that this supremely important choice should not be pressed automatically on all scholars alike or in any stereotyped way, urging that we must respect the rights of the individual, and that the proper time for decision is at those psychological crises in the scholar's development when the decision will be a natural and a permanent one.

In order to test the practice of a number of Schools in this supremely important matter, a religious paper * a few years ago sent out a questionnaire to over five hundred Schools belonging to several denominations, and in widely separated localities, on this subject. Only one hundred and forty-two replies were received, and these showed that two-thirds of the Schools relied upon the observance of Decision Day for the one special effort to lead the scholars to decision for Christ. Only two Schools reported a continuous and systematic effort to secure the decision of every scholar. Fifteen Schools had no plan at all, while others had various ways, such as revival meetings, pastor's classes, prayer for the unsaved, and "urging teachers to secure decision."

A careful examination of all the replies sent in did not produce very encouraging results from the point of view of securing decisions, and it was abundantly clear that a very large percentage of teen-age scholars do not get a direct personal invitation to accept Christ. A further question as to plans adopted for "keeping in touch with young converts to train them for Christian service" revealed the disconcerting truth that not one-half of the Schools replying had any special plan

* *The Sunday School Times*, 1919.

whatever for follow-up work after decisions were made.

After allowing for the fact that there is a risk in basing a general argument on special examples, it is clear that the Sunday School must largely fail as an evangelising agency unless definite steps are taken to ensure that every teen-age scholar at some time or in some way is urged to make a decision for Christ. Opinions may differ as to how this principle is to be carried out, but on the principle itself there is no room for discussion. Psychology has taught us that there is infinite variety in religious experience, but it has also made perfectly clear that God's way with young life is to provide seasons of spiritual awakening through which all must pass. It is easier, therefore, to state our problem than to solve it. We must find a way of pressing the claims of Christ upon the individual during this period of religious awakening, and so plan our Sunday School work that no scholar passes out of this period or out of the School without having seriously considered the claims of Christ and His Church. And because the need is so urgent and the task is so delicate and individualistic, the alert Sunday School Teacher cannot be satisfied until he has discovered the golden moment for proposing the great question. Realising the delicate nature of his task, the Teacher will know that there is no short cut to success, no hard and fast rules to observe, no ready-made plan that can be applied. With some scholars it will be perfectly easy to secure a decision, for it will be the natural climax to the process of Christian education. Other scholars will need the impetus of a special occa-

sion or the example of others to "step over the line," but in every class group there will be some who by disposition or circumstances can only be approached after very careful and prayerful thought and through a most intimate knowledge. The records of evangelistic work among adults show that some people fail to respond to any of the methods that ordinarily appeal, and eventually are won by a "chance" word or unexpected incident. In just the same way there are adolescents who are scared by, or are indifferent to, Decision Day appeals or ordinary ways of approach, and so must be the subjects of special plans. It is here that the Sunday School Teacher will often succeed after every one else has failed.

The argument that individuality must be respected and that no evangelistic method can be applied to all scholars indiscriminately, cannot be allowed to rule out definite times for decision in the Sunday School. Granted that we must proceed very tactfully and must be prepared to use other methods in certain cases, the demand holds good that a Decision Day must be included in our Sunday School work among older children. Its occasion and its method must be adapted to local needs and a knowledge of the scholars concerned, but a place must be found for it, and in any case adequate preparation is essential. Whether it be a day universally recognised or a "red letter day" in the calendar of a particular School or class, must be left to the discretion of the workers. The date is unimportant compared with the necessity for ensuring that after adequate preparation every scholar shall have the

great choice put before him definitely at special times or seasons. In some cases the time has been governed by the course of lessons taken in the Intermediate section of School, a course of studies of the Life of Christ being so planned that the dedication of the scholars' lives to His service will be prayerfully anticipated as "the expression" of the impression made by the lessons.

Where an annual Decision Day is considered the best plan, experience proves that the permanency of the results obtained is governed by the adequacy of the preparation made. Special lessons for a month are chosen to prepare for it, and members of the Church and Sunday School staff mobilise all their prayer forces for it. The co-operation of the parents is invited. When "the day" arrives a special service of decision and consecration is held—not during the afternoon, when the mental faculties are not at their best, nor at the evening service when an emotional appeal may produce an atmosphere of excitement—but on Sunday morning early, or at morning School. In the freshness of the morning hour, when all the faculties are alert and the youth feels braced to meet any demands made, the Christian life should be presented as a daring adventure and a call to give the utmost for the highest, without any attempt to minimise the sacrifice demanded or to disguise the high ideals set up by Christ for His followers. To such a challenge, presented in such circumstances, the young adolescent will usually make a joyous response and can be invited to register the decision in black and white in "a Book

of the Covenant" lying ready for the purpose on the Communion Table. A Decision Day carried out with set purpose and in this spirit, is likely to produce permanent results, especially if it is followed by special classes for the training of all who have signed the Covenant, in the practice of the Christian life and the responsibilities of Christian service. An annual Covenant Service for a renewal of vows and re-dedication to service will not only help to keep young people faithful to their pledge, but will also gauge the permanent success of such a plan.

The value of the Sunday School as an evangelistic agency through its Primary training class must also be recognised. A passionate desire for service is often manifested in the young adolescent before he has grasped the necessity for a public confession of faith. This has resulted in whole classes of adolescent scholars volunteering for teaching work in the Primary Department. In some cases these offers have been sternly refused and such harsh terms as "unconverted teachers" have been used, the result being that the rebuff has literally produced "unconverted adults." More discerning workers have hesitated to pass judgment in such cases, with the happier result that these Primary helpers, under the spell of the work and through the agency of the Primary Training Class, have speedily made public confession of their faith. The fact of the matter is that "the Spirit bloweth where it listeth," and in many instances our older scholars almost unconsciously and often secretly make their decision for Christ and express it in the form of a desire to serve Him. We have to recognise that

this manner of decision requires as tactful handling and as careful encouraging as any of the more ordinary forms of decision in public that are accepted without question—and which may often be more ephemeral.

Chapter VIII

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER AS EVANGELIST

W. D. MILLER, M.A.*

For their function as evangelists it is particularly true that Sunday School Teachers must ultimately train themselves. Here most intensely the work relates itself to their personal spiritual condition and depends upon their own spiritual habits and discipline. The most perfectly organised School with the most fully equipped Teachers is only the scaffolding, the supremely necessary scaffolding, within which the spiritual temple is to be reared. If teachers are to understand their function and appreciate their privilege they must keep before them the true relation of the child to the Kingdom of God as Jesus reveals that relation in the Gospels.

THE CHILD AND THE KINGDOM

No reader of the first ten verses of the eighteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, or of the fourteenth verse of the nineteenth chapter of the same Gospel, can fail to understand the truth Jesus declares. Ac-

* While these pages were passing through the press news came of the sudden death of our contributor. For many these last words of one of Glasgow's most esteemed and successful ministers will be invested with special significance.

cording to Jesus, every child born into this world is born inside the Kingdom of God, not outside the Kingdom—is born to salvation not to condemnation. That every child is also born into a state of sin and misery is painfully evident and true, but that fact does not annihilate the other fact, any more than the gross conditions which constitute the heritage of many a child born in slums and elsewhere, annihilate the heritage of such a child as a child of God. Jesus claims every child as His from the beginning and makes good the claim in the name of God. That there is "original sin" in all, sin in the nature, is a painful and incontestable fact, but that there is "original good" in all, imparted and maintained by the Spirit of God, is a glorious and equally incontestable fact. To the warfare between these two all are born, but the Redeeming Christ makes it plain that He gives a place in His Kingdom to all souls, and that it is there they begin their conflict with the promise of victory, the assurance of salvation, the Presence and Power of their Saviour always with them.

OBJECT OF SUNDAY SCHOOL EVANGELISM

There is a saying of Vinet which was a favourite quotation of the late Principal Denney:—"In preaching the object is of more importance than the subject." The saying does not under-rate the subject of preaching, but it emphasises the truth that the definite object of it places the preacher at once in the right relation both to his subject and to his hearer. To make every scholar a true and real disciple of Christ is the definite

object of Sunday School Evangelism. This involves equally clear and definite aims in the whole scheme of Spiritual Education for which the Sunday School exists. What are some of the requisites on the part of teachers if they are to be successful evangelists?

BE THE FRIEND AND WIN THE CONFIDENCE OF EVERY SCHOLAR

If it be possible for any teacher to give a contribution to the education of any scholar without getting into personal and intimate friendship with the scholar, it is not possible for the Sunday School Teacher to do his or her best without this. It is the supreme Friendship that is to be cultivated and the Sacrament of that is the human friendship between teacher and scholar. Wherever possible the teacher should know the homes from which the scholars come and be the friend of the family as well. A short time spent in talk with the members of the class as they assemble and before the School opens keeps the friendship in repair and it is never difficult to thus win the confidence of each scholar. Just in proportion as Christ is real to the teacher will He become real to the scholar. The world of youth can be made, and should be made, the Christ world. Among all the real figures of parents and friends, and among even the fairy and phantom figures of the wonder world of childhood, there should be realised the Figure of the Son of God, as Child and Boy and Youth and Man hallowing and transfiguring the whole. To imprint this picture on the child imagination, to impress the whole realism of the Gos-

pel history on the young mind, so that when with growing intelligence the childish things of wonder and of fancy fade away, this in all its glory and tenderness, its majesty and simplicity, will only become more vivid —this is the function, the high and holy function of the Sunday School Teacher.

AIM AT ESTABLISHING DEFINITE SPIRITUAL HABITS

True Evangelism means change of habits, the displacement of the evil habit by the good. "The expulsive power of a new affection" was the great descriptive phrase of Dr. Chalmers. Sunday School Evangelism should mean that boys and girls are equipped for life with the good habit already established, and therefore the preventative of the evil finding a lodgment in the character. There are three definite spiritual activities which every teacher should, through all the subjects of teaching, keep clearly in view. These are Prayer, Penitence and Obedience to Christ. It is a complete mistake to suppose that these habits cannot be taught. Quite definite instructions can be given varying with the lesson taught but all converging on the one end. The teachers' efficiency will depend constantly upon the practice and strength of these same habits and activities in their own lives.

(a) PRAYER

It is never difficult to teach a scholar to say a prayer, but saying prayers is one thing and praying is another. To get scholars to understand that praying is simply "speaking to Jesus about everything"

and then listening to what Jesus will say—is to lay the foundation of the habit of prayer and of true spiritual communion. The whole Gospels become illumined when a reader realises that answer and replies can be expected from Jesus now, as real and clear as those He gave to His disciples in Galilee or in the upper room. It has been a fatal blight on the Christian character that prayer has been regarded as largely offering petitions rather than holding "consultation" with God. Sunday School Teachers have it in their power to do no less than transform the spiritual habit of prayer in a generation.

It can be made clear to any scholar that prayer is a real communion with God when it is a "speaking to Jesus" and there need be no confusion in the mind either of the teacher or of the scholar between praying to Jesus and praying to God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" said Jesus, and this means also that "he who speaks to Me speaks to the Father and he who hears Me and receives an answer from me, hears the Father and receives an answer from Him."

The injunction to "pray without ceasing" can be understood and obeyed when it is made clear that prayer means being always in touch with Jesus and leaving no part of daily life outside the region of prayer. The fatal defect in the character and practice of most professing Christians is that large tracts of life and activity are excluded from prayer, and so prayer often becomes largely a confession of the blunders and mistakes made there instead of a planning out with Christ of what is to be done and how it is to be done. One morning a Mother was hearing her boy say

his prayer. On that day another boy, not quite a congenial companion, was to spend the day with him. When he had finished his usual prayer he added, after a pause, "and, Lord Jesus, help me to be decent to Willie to-day." The world would be a happier place if more Christians prayed such prayers. If our youth can be taught to pray for those they do not like, or for those with whom they have quarrelled, they will understand the meaning of the Lord's command: "Love your enemies." (Teachers should master Chapter xxi, of Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.*) Nothing will so help and impress any class as united prayer for an absent or sick scholar, nor will anything so instruct and inspire every member of the class as the knowledge that their teacher is praying for each of them.

(b) PENITENCE

Repentance means that perpetual readjustment of our lives to God's will, and the renewal of our heart's response to His love, without which the Christian character can never be made stable, nor the Christian life effective in service. Matthew Henry, the commentator, says that it is not sinning that ruins men but sinning and not repenting, and when we see the coarse, aggressive, evil-speaking type of character among our youth, we see the result of accumulated evil in the absence of repentance. That every scholar should early learn that spiritual action, practice and habit which breaks the connection between the will and the evil or wrong said or done, and so prevent any wicked or unworthy thing becoming a permanent part of the

character, should be the distinct aim and prayer-sought object on the part of the teacher.

The real difficulty of the teacher is to implant in the heart of each scholar the true and permanent motive force which will always lead to repentance. Very early in life a child does feel the sense of wrong-doing and does realise that there is something amiss in its relation with God, and if not well guided may quickly drift into a state of hopeless misunderstanding when prayer will become quite unreal or even cease. The dread of punishment will never produce the right motive of repentance. With the utmost patience the teacher should endeavour to instil into the mind and heart of the scholar the truth of the holy sacrificing love of Jesus as manifested in the Gospels, in His invitations, His works of kindness and healing, and finally in His death and rising again and coming to His disciples in their loneliness and sorrow and despair. Particularly His treatment of Peter and of Thomas should be emphasised in seeking to give the right feeling as to the way we treat our Lord.

A very wise and devoted Mother once had a time of difficulty with her little girl who was being taught at home before being sent to school. The child took a rebellious fit and would learn no lessons. Her teacher and her mother tried all manner of discipline, giving lines to write and commit to memory, and when all failed even punishment was tried. One day an arrangement had been made for the child to accompany her mother on a very happy visit and she was to start when her lessons with her teacher were finished. She was more rebellious that day than usual, apparently believing that nothing could be permitted to interfere

with her promised enjoyment, and when the hour came for her to go, her teacher had to report that she had not done her work and that she had still so many lines to learn and repeat. The mother decided that the engagement must be sacrificed and at once went herself to the schoolroom, took her place at the little daughter's desk and said, "Now, Mother must take your punishment for you" and so began to learn the lines prescribed. She did not leave the desk until she had repeated all that the teacher had commanded should be done by the child, but before she had finished her child had broken down completely making the simple confession, "I thought you were all angry with me, Mother, I did not think you were so vexed with me." If the children of our Sunday Schools were wisely taught that all the wrong they do, and all the evil things done in the world, are inflicting pain and sorrow on the heart of Christ now, as really as the nails driven into His hands and feet did when His body hung on Calvary, the true meaning of His life and of His death would gradually unfold to their minds and the true motive of repentance be lodged in their hearts.

(c) OBEDIENCE, OR DOING THINGS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

To consult Christ on every step in life, to seek to do all things for His sake each day, is the highest education and the noblest equipment our youth can experience and it is the function of our Sunday Schools to send such "living epistles of Christ" into the world. In youth all things are possible and all the possibilities are present in their most intense form during the years

of Sunday School life. It is also now clearly seen that Christianity must be seriously tried and seriously applied to all life if the world is not to perish. Never in history have the words been so completely vindicated "there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." To get our children and youth to have the holy and exhilarating experience of doing things for Christ's sake, to enable them to acquire the fascinating interest that living for and with Christ gives to each day—is the work of the Sunday School Teacher.

There are two elemental truths to be instilled into the mind in this connection. *First, that each is a servant of Christ and He is our Master.* It is under this aspect that all Christ's work for us, and all His relations to us, can best be explained to a young and healthy mind. Discipleship began in this way. Andrew and John literally followed Jesus along the road where they first met Him and so also did the first company of disciples. The word of Jesus which summoned Matthew and drew the others from their ordinary callings was "Follow Me." This came to mean following with the mind, the understanding and the will. Often they lagged far behind but they followed on to know their Lord. Simon had followed for long before he confessed "I am a sinful man, O Lord." Every child and every youth can understand what is meant by taking Jesus as Master and by following Him. By so doing the real foundation of the Christion character is laid and the true preparation begun for all the Christian experiences of conviction of sin through failure, and discovery of Christ as Saviour

and Sanctifier. The great structure of Apostolic character and service was reared on this foundation and Paul calls himself "a servant of Jesus Christ" in introducing himself in his letter to the Romans. It is also on this simple but all-embracing truth that the appeal to come to the Lord's Table can be based. In all senior classes definite opportunity should be given to the scholars to learn the meaning of the sacrament, either by their teacher explaining this or by inviting them and encouraging them to attend the classes conducted by the minister for communicants. By the ages of 15 or 16, Sunday School scholars should wish to come to the Table. In youth there are certain natural crises which occur which furnish the psychological moments of spiritual awakening and enlightenment and which may be called times of conversion; but every case of catastrophic conversion among our Sunday School scholars raises the question of the failure of the home and school nurture to accomplish their real object. Along the line of being "servants of Jesus" our youth should come by process of growth into the experience of Salvation.*

Second, that each has a mission in life.—The great blight on the young life of our time is "aimlessness." The supreme miracle of the New Testament, the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, had as its consequence and vindication the moral and spiritual miracle of the transformation of the baffled and despairing disciples into the heralds and missionaries of the Cross with a mission and commission to "make

* Teachers with great benefit might consult a little book, *"Thoughts on Christian Sanctity,"* by Bishop Moule.

disciples of all nations." There is no "election," either in the Old Testament or in the New, of any soul or nation to merely personal or national salvation; it is always that "all families of the earth" be blessed. The great revelation of the incarnation of Jesus is that God needs human life in which to make Himself known and accomplish His purposes on earth. To reveal some of God's thoughts our minds are given us, to translate into actual human history some part of His purpose and daily to be a link between heaven and earth God has given us the gift of life. The mind of youth should be cleared of the unhealthy belief that this world is meant by God to perish in wickedness and that the saved are to be rescued from the ruins. It is to be won for Christ, it is to be the scene and sphere of His Kingdom, and its end is not to be tragedy and failure but salvation and triumph. To attain this consummation all are called to be workers together with Christ and, as in the day schools, it is a definite part of the teachers' duty to train the scholar for citizenship and to guide each in the choice of a craft or a career so it should be the Sunday School teachers' concern to train scholars for citizenship in Christ's Kingdom and a career in His service. Wise and prayerful counsel here would go far to prevent the leakage of the adolescent from the Church which has been the baffling problem for so long.

THE TEACHER'S INSPIRATION

That is a very wonderful saying of Jesus "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for

I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Manifestly our Lord here uses the beliefs of the time about guardian angels to emphasise in the most direct way the truth, that all the Spiritual powers and agencies at His Father's disposal gather to the help of every soul in its struggle, and of every soul that seeks to originate or direct spiritual impulses in another soul. There are heavenly teachers and workers interested and engaged in the work of the Sunday Schools and they with the great band of teachers on earth are workers together with God, with Christ and with the Holy Spirit. This should be the inspiration of all teachers and should banish all thoughts of defeat or despondency.

AIDS TO TEACHERS—THE CONSECRATION SERVICE

It has proved a very helpful experience in some Sunday Schools to have a Consecration Service at the beginning of a new session at which all teachers are gathered in the presence of the congregation to dedicate themselves anew to their service. In very simple words the aim of the Sunday School can be expressed and the teachers can all unite in words of consecration to the service of winning the children for Christ. Such a service reminds parents, teachers and all in the congregation of their responsibility for the youth around them and unites the homes with the School in the common service.

FAMILY WORSHIP

It has also been found helpful to the work of the teachers to get families to use the Golden Text Book with Daily Readings all bearing on the Sunday lesson. Even in homes where Family Worship has not been conducted it has been found possible to get the children who come from such homes to begin it and even to get their parents to join with them. They can read the portion of Scripture for the day together and then unite in the Lord's Prayer or read the prayer for the day given in the Text Book. The children thus become evangelists in their own homes.

CONFERENCES

Much more use should be made of the meeting or bi-monthly meetings of Teachers for Conference on how best to win the children, and the whole question of Decision Day, or Days, should be thoroughly discussed, and if decided upon carefully prepared for by such Conferences. It is wise to make such Decision Days coincide with Communion Day in those Churches where the Sacrament is dispensed quarterly or even not so frequently. It has also been found helpful for the Minister of the Congregation to have the Communion elements placed upon the table on the platform when the scholars meet, so that he may explain to them simply the meaning of the rite and the significance of each part of the service. This, however, should be done rarely as its impressiveness would be lowered by frequent repetition.

Chapter IX

THE CASE FOR EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS FOR CHILDREN

D. P. THOMSON, M.A.

The past few years have witnessed a sharp and widespread reaction against the idea of holding evangelistic meetings of any kind for children. The movement to abolish the mass appeal altogether in favour of educational and environmental evangelism appears to be gaining ground steadily. Many of the pioneers of modern Sunday School methods, to whose energy and enthusiasm we owe so much, do not hesitate to express their disapproval of the Children's Mission and the Children's Missioner as means of winning the boys and girls of to-day for Christ. It is their contention that as the home and the Sunday School are the real nurseries of Christian character, to the parent and the teacher alone belong by right the privilege and responsibility of leading the children to Christ.

The antipathy to this form of evangelistic work among children so noticeable in many quarters to-day —and so obvious in many Churches and Sunday Schools where up to date methods of grading and teaching have been introduced—is based on three grounds. It rests on a growing realisation of what is implied in the findings of a scientific Child Psychology, on careful observation of the fruits of successive

series of special evangelistic meetings for young people, and on some considerable familiarity with the type of men and methods generally employed. The threefold argument is a weighty and impressive one, and a strong case can be made out against the whole idea of holding evangelistic meetings for children under any circumstances whatever.

The psychologist has succeeded in convincing most workers among the young of the limitations of the child mind and of the extreme suggestibility of child nature. The child, we are told, is quite unable to comprehend either the subtleties of Christian doctrine or the implications of Christian discipleship, is incapable of realising the responsibilities of the moral choice, and is altogether unready for anything in the nature of religious decision. He can be easily moved through his emotional nature, either to public confession or private resolution on the matter of personal religion, but such decision is almost certain to be of the most limited duration and is more than likely to result in violent and dangerous reaction. There is, further, the probability that the reality and depth of the spiritual life will come to be judged in future years by these experiences of childhood and will be discredited accordingly.

Psychologists and religious educationalists who have pursued their investigations into the after experience of those affected by Children's Missions, and have analysed the results of successive decades of evangelistic meetings for boys and girls, have produced an array of facts that call for the most serious consideration. It is undeniable that tens of thousands of children

in previous generations have been subject to the cruddest forms of appeal in the name of Evangelism, that feelings have been played on, and innocence and purity unwittingly but none the less deeply wounded, by those who ought to have known better, and to have realised what their Master meant when he spoke with such anger of such as offended one of His little ones. It is unquestionable that children have often been moved to tears and public confession by the recital of a few pathetic stories, that evangelists working among the young have not hesitated to measure their success by the hysterical condition induced in the meeting, and that all the terrors of hell have been used to shock sensitive young lives to what was called repentance.

These facts make painful reading, but it is well that we should face them. More painful still have been the after-effects in such cases. The numbers of the so-called "converts" of such meetings who have been for ever repelled from evangelical Christianity can scarcely be estimated, and of the remainder it is hardly too much to say that the greater proportion have either settled down to the dead level of a nominal Christianity or have arrived at the sceptical conviction that there is nothing whatever of value in religious experience—that it consists simply of the enthusiasm, aspiration and imagination we put into it.

It is hardly to be wondered at that ministers, teachers and educationalists—with these facts in mind—have come to the conclusion that evangelistic meetings for children are to be avoided even at the cost of lost opportunities. The risks are so great, and the results

in many cases so disastrous, as to create the reluctant conviction that any deep and lasting success attained is too dearly bought at the price. Some knowledge of the type of men frequently engaging in this form of work at the present time, and of the methods they tend to adopt, only serves to strengthen their conviction and to confirm them in their hostility to this particular line of work.

It may well be asked, in view of the arguments that have been advanced, and the facts that have been adduced to support them, whether any reasonable plea can be made for evangelistic meetings for children under any circumstances whatever, or any substantial case built up in their favour. The writer would unhesitatingly answer that question in the affirmative. It is his growing conviction that there is a very real place for such meetings, and that the religious educationalist who fails to recognise this is doing less than justice to all the facts of the situation. The question of the methods to be adopted, and the type of men and women best fitted for the work can safely be left till later.

Here we are primarily concerned with the justification of the evangelistic meeting as a method of approach to the boys and girls of to-day on behalf of a Church anxious to recruit young life for her Lord and Master.

(1) *The evangelistic meeting for children is the only effective means of reaching large classes of boys and girls in our industrial and urban communities—to say nothing of many outlying country districts in all parts of the land.* There are tens of thousands of children

in the great centres of population whose environment is altogether unfavourable to the normal growth of Christian character, and whose parents manifest not the least concern in their moral and spiritual welfare. A considerable number of them are accessible to the Sunday School, the Band of Hope and kindred organisations, and not a few are being reached and won by the splendid educational evangelism for which the modern grading system at its best is responsible, but for a large proportion of these children the Sunday School possesses no attraction. Their parents are unwilling to co-operate with the teachers in securing their regular attendance. The children themselves find the School at once too dignified and too dull. Run on really attractive lines, the evangelistic mission for children stands a very good chance of gaining their interest, and may very well succeed in providing the means by which the gulf which separates them from Sunday School and Church will ultimately be bridged. The lively choruses, enthusiastic and even crowded meetings, lantern lectures or chalk talks, almost inseparable from such gatherings, make a much more effective appeal to the slum child—an habitué, even at a tender age, of the Cinema and the Music Hall—than does the Sunday School with its great regularity, decorum and discipline. Given a Missioner of the right kind, using methods at once sane, healthy and psychologically sound, these children may be brought under permanent impression and kindly Christian influence, and led, by gradual stages, through the Sunday School and into the Church. Above all, they can really be won for Christ.

The slum child is not the only one more readily accessible to this type of evangelistic approach than to any other. The child at the very opposite end of the social scale is often in a strangely analogous position. There are thousands of wealthy parents who would not dream of allowing *their* children to attend a Sunday School, and who make no provision whatever for the spiritual needs of their boys and girls. The children of such parents are left to grow up in complete ignorance of what Christianity can mean in personal experience, and are in danger of going out into the larger world of adolescence and adult life dominated by purely materialistic conceptions, and robbed of just that ideal and dynamic which they need most, and which Jesus Christ alone can supply. The experiences of the Children's Special Service Mission, alike in the preparatory and public schools and at the holiday resorts, has abundantly demonstrated the possibility of reaching and winning children of just this class by means of Sand Services and special types of evangelistic meetings. What the C.S.S.M. has done, others have done and are doing, all over the country.

Intermediate between the two classes mentioned, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there is a large proportion of the children of the middle-classes deprived of definitely Christian influences in the home, and not readily accessible to the Sunday School, which can be reached along similar lines. Is all this great army of young life, it must be asked, to be left exposed to the attacks of the enemy unprotected and unequipped? Is it to be left at the mercy of all those

influences that operate so powerfully in an unchristian environment? Surely not!

(2) *The evangelistic meeting for children is the one generally effective means of bringing into personal relationship with Jesus Christ hundreds of boys and girls in our congregations and Sunday Schools, whose teachers—either through lack of training, or through want of personal spiritual experience—neglect the opportunities afforded them of winning their scholars for Christ.*

It has been urged, not unreasonably, that many Sunday School teachers lead their scholars up to a certain point but no further. The children, year after year, are getting instruction but remain outside the Kingdom; they come regularly to school but do not come to Christ; they learn to love their teacher, but they do not learn to love the Saviour. If they remain in School they may join some senior class, and under an earnest teacher be led into the Church, but will they remain? The vast majority do not. At 14, when they go to work, they consider themselves too big for the Sunday School, and they begin to "drift away." It is here, in town and country alike, but perhaps more especially in the country districts, that "Children's Missions" find a place, and succeed in meeting a very real need.

(3) *The evangelistic meeting for children is the most effective means of reaching and winning certain types of young people in all our Churches and Sunday Schools.* There are boys and girls in every congregation and school who are much more accessible to the Missioner than to their own parents or teachers, and

much more susceptible to the appeal of the mission meeting than to the environmental influences of home and Sunday School. Because of some peculiarity of temperament, or by reason of some psychologically determining experience in early years with its resultant "complex," they will open their hearts much more readily to a stranger than to one whom they know well, and in not a few cases, will avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by a season of special meetings for making what proves to be a genuine and lasting decision for Christ. Again and again in the course of his own work the writer has experienced this, and others similarly engaged in widely different fields corroborate his testimony.

These three lines of argument combine to produce a very strong case in favour of evangelistic meetings for children under certain circumstances and in certain places, but there is another line of evidence which ought not to be overlooked, its definitely psychological significance making it the more impressive. If during a special evangelistic effort in a congregation or a community, no meetings for children are held, and no opportunity is given for their being personally dealt with on spiritual things in some one or other of the meetings, then the unfortunate impression will be created in many young minds that the love and grace and power of Jesus Christ are not for them, and that they must wait until they are older before they can become Christians. Many a sensitive child has wept sorely and suffered excruciating agony at the thought of being left outside when others were getting the blessing.

Lest it should be thought that such cases represent abnormal—or even distinctly pathological—types it may be well to adduce the testimony of one of the most authoritative religious psychologists of the present day—Dr. J. Bisset Pratt. In his recently published book, *The Religious Consciousness,* Dr. Pratt has a deeply interesting chapter on "The Religion of Childhood." "Children," he says, "are often very unhappy; in fact a sensitive child may be as utterly wretched half a dozen times in one day as his father is in the course of a year. . . . Nor are children, say from eight to fourteen, by any means so innocent as we like to think them. Many of them consciously break more moral laws than they ever will in mature life. And accompanying these actions, often goes a sense of sin, and an inward tumult which we never guess because they are deliberately hidden from all us outsiders." *

The effect on the minds of such children of the impression—however unwittingly conveyed—that they are too young to be the subjects of the redeeming grace and power of Christ can more readily be imagined than described.

Almost more serious are cases of the type to which Mr. Tiplady refers in his *Social Christianity in the New Era.* In one of the chapters of that book he tells of how a boy of ten, anxious to dedicate his young life to the service of Christ, and waiting behind after a meeting for the purpose of being spoken to, was passed over by workers whose sole concern seemed to be with the reclamation of drunkards and hardened

* *The Religious Consciousness,* by J. Bisset Pratt.

sinners. Brooding on the incident in the months that followed, and weighing it in the light of the preaching under which he sat, that boy came to the terrible conclusion that before he could become a Christian he must first become a prodigal and go out into "the far country." Then, after a riotous and ungodly life, he would have something of which to repent, and for which to seek with penitence the Divine forgiveness, and then, at last, the Church would welcome him back with open arms. Appeals to him to give his young life to Christ in the freshness of youth, to which he listened from time to time on Children's Sunday, left him with a feeling of unreality. "One felt," he wrote long afterwards, "that the teachers just wanted to keep us safe until we come to years of understanding. . . . The child's acceptance of religion was, it seemed, but the false dawn, the real dawn could not come until one reached the teens."

The very human document from which these words are quoted—and it is selected from a mass of similar evidence—serves to show what impression is made on the child's mind, and what the consequences of that impression may be, if he gets the idea that vital Christian experience cannot be entered on before adolescence. It suggests what may very well happen if no provision is made for effective work among children during special evangelistic meetings.

Finally, we may sum up the case for evangelistic meetings for children by citing the mature conviction of one whose Presbyterian upbringing and environment and typical Scottish caution—whose long experience in the ministry, and painstaking psychological

study—give him some title to be heard. In his recently published book, "The Psychology of Christian Life and Behaviour," Dr. W. S. Bruce of Banff, the well-known Scotch theologian and ecclesiastical leader, puts some searching questions on the validity of this form of religious enterprise. "Should Gospel Missions to the children be encouraged?" he asks. "Practically are they desirable? Religiously are they beneficial? Psychologically are they justifiable?" And this is his considered verdict:—"Putting the last question first we have no hesitation in giving an affirmative answer. Psychology commends them. It justifies their object, while it conditions their methods and limits their range. The answer to the first two questions is to be found in the right consideration of these limiting conditions." Dr. Bruce then goes on to describe the ideal Children's Missioner, and to give some of his own experiences of the work. This method of work in seeking to win the children for Christ his balanced judgment leads him warmly to commend, and of the significance and value of such a testimony there can hardly be two opinions.

What has been said in these pages is not to be taken as in any way justifying all types of evangelistic meetings for children, or even as an endorsement of that particular method of approach as the best in every or any place. Everything depends on the local circumstances, and on the way in which such meetings are planned and conducted. There are types of evangelistic missions to the young to which no educated Christian man can fail to take exception. There are methods employed, and lines of approach adopted—

even by men who profess to be specialists in this department—which in no way commend themselves to our judgment.

In Chapter X Mr. Burgess deals with the Special Mission to Children, and in the succeeding chapter I have made some attempt to indicate the lines on which evangelistic meetings for children should be conducted.

Chapter X

SPECIAL MISSION FOR CHILDREN

A. W. BURGESS

In these days of cost accountancy, business efficiency and keen competition, every industrial department is subjected to analysis and is expected to pay. It is true, however, that some departments are more profitable than others. If this form of cost analysis and comparative results is extended to Christian service, it will be found that work among the young is more fruitful than any other. In the Sunday School movement, it is possible to influence those who before long will cast their spell upon others, and the child has before him the possibility of consecrating his whole life to the highest of all services.

There is to-day a movement to put the child in his rightful position in Church and State, and modern religious thought in placing the emphasis upon the child is only following the Master's injunction to "Feed my Lambs."

The apathy in so many homes regarding spiritual matters, as well as the absence of family life in certain sections, make the Sunday School a far greater institution than it has ever been, and the Sunday School teacher has a calling which is an heroic enterprise of faith and courage.

THE TEACHERS LEAGUE OF SUPPORTERS

Many means are capable of employment in the great task of winning the young life for the Master, and Adam Smith's theory of the Division of Labour has its effect on the many contributory causes which have Decision or Conversion as their result. No wise teacher or organiser will overlook the causes which have fitted him or her for the holy task, or will neglect the other outside influences at work.

It has become common in some parts for footballers to form a Supporters' Club, and the latter, as its name implies, has as its two-fold object the attendance at all matches and the encouragement which comes from the lusty shout. In the same way, the sprinter knows what it means to hear the applause as he passes a competitor in the race. No Sunday School teacher would desire to work alone, and while reward has no place in our economy, a supporters' league is a great asset. The co-operation of parents is helpful, and the teacher's visits to the home are a part of Christian service, perhaps as vital as direct class-teaching. Modern school methods and equipment are working on behalf of the teacher, and the week-night meetings assist in attaching the young mind to School and Church. The minister's Sunday talks to the children are for the sole purpose of winning them, and behind him and the teacher stands the influence of public and private prayer. All these strengthen the hands of the teacher, and the Special Mission for children must be considered from the same standpoint.

NO TABULATION NECESSARY

The tabulation of the results of Special Missions is to be deprecated, because complete results of any form of spiritual seed sowing and reaping are impossible. At the same time, evidence exists in the records of the National Sunday School Union and elsewhere to show that these Missions are well worth while. Workers at home and abroad who received their soul awakening at Special Services testify to the accuracy of this statement. It can be recalled that frequently one hears the statement "converted at the Mission conducted by So & So," while an atmosphere entirely its own is created in the minds of many by a reference to such services.

THE OBJECTS OF A SPECIAL MISSION

A Special Mission will aim at focussing attention on the need for the acceptance of Christ as Saviour; it will proceed on the basis of the desirability of the definiteness of conversion, but it will also promote a spirit of expectancy and prayer, and can be judged as ineffectual if the Church and School are not uplifted at its close. Apart, therefore, from the immediate results on the scholars, the teacher should find at its termination an atmosphere exactly adjusted to the requirements of a teacher's calling.

ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITES

A business is not made in a day; a sermon is not solely the work of hours, and a Special Mission needs

as careful preparation as the one, and the contribution of as much personality as the other. The message and method of the Special Missioner are useless without prayer and preparation. The work begins, continues, and ends in prayer, but preparation must go hand in hand with it.

We get out of our Christian Service, out of business, out of life, just what we put into it, and this applies equally to the Special Mission. There is great advantage to be derived often from the new voice, and there is often equal gain arising from the new method. The advertisement hoarding, the form of invitation adjusted to the needs of those it seeks to interest, the very titles of the Missioner's addresses, the creation and maintenance of active interest of Minister, Church Officers, Congregation, and School are the alphabet of successful preparation. If it is worth doing it is worth doing well, and if it is organised thoughtfully in prayer, there is no need to doubt the result. Not only will a Special Mission assist the Minister and teacher in their normal duties, it will bring in boys and girls, many of whom attend no Sunday School; boys and girls in as great a need as those Raikes found and harboured. Properly handled, the Special Mission is a dynamic, and the Church and School rising to its joint responsibility will seek to meet the new needs of those clamouring for spiritual food. It will be seen that nothing should be permitted to interfere with the series of meetings, and that careful consultation as to details is essential before they begin.

THE SPECIAL MISSIONER

The Special Missioner is necessarily a specialist; he knows his Master, he understands the child and usually the adult, and he possesses the grace of attracting both. He will forbid anything in the nature of sensationalism; he will adopt sane methods, and will leave young and old the opportunity to make the all-important decision without the least suggestion of compulsion or pressure. He will know that team play is a characteristic of Christian service, and he will consider himself as one who co-operates with Minister, teacher and parent. The teacher will watch his ways, and will learn something of the difficult art of Personal Evangelism.

A SUCCESSFUL PLAN

In a normal Special Mission, it is very desirable to begin on a Saturday and to close on the following Tuesday week. The value of two Sundays in which to get at home with the Adults will be appreciated, and usually the second Sunday is a time of rich harvest.

The first Saturday is a "Welcome" night, at which Missioner and workers join hands in prayer, and it should be a time of personal searching of heart. Every worker should be able to work enthusiastically as a result of the previous prayer meetings and the "Welcome" Meeting, and on this basis alone is co-operation possible. It will be arranged of course to give the Special Missioner one clear day's rest during

the week. Throughout the whole time he will need the prayers of those associated with him, and it will encourage him to see teachers and scholars together at the meetings.

A Special Missioner needs to be able to deal with adults as well as the boys and girls, and in this case two meetings each evening are possible, one, say, at 6.30 p.m. for juniors, and the other at 8 p.m. for adults. The Missioner may hold a "Museum Service" at which objects mentioned in the Bible are exhibited, and the teacher will be surprised at the interest and art manifested by the youngsters in securing the exhibits. He will doubtless arrange for afternoon Bible Readings, and for evening Lantern Lectures.

It is usual to restrict the age of the Juniors so that only those of eight and upwards are invited, but great emphasis can be laid upon the adolescents, for whom such meetings as Football Services are possible. In Canada and the United States, the young people are invited to Banquets and Suppers, and the methods are almost limitless.

On the two Sundays, the Special Missioner should share or occupy the pulpit, and in the afternoon he will be available for the Sunday School.

CONTINUATION EDUCATION

Stress has been made within recent years of the need for education after school. A Mission does not end when the doors are shut at its close. The Christian Life is a progressive experience—it is a journey and not a rest on a mile-stone. The young converts

will require training and guidance. They are just recruits, but the wearing of a uniform is not sufficient in the Army or in the King's Service. The Church and School will be well advised therefore, before the Mission is held, to decide as to the form of the "After-care" work, and in this extension no one will be more pleased to assist than the Minister himself.

SPECIAL OPEN AIR MISSIONS

There is a particular form of the Special Mission to which reference should be made, and if it differs in method from that already described, it will be apparent that its aim is the same.

The holiday months present a great opportunity to win the boys and girls for Jesus Christ. The National Sunday School Union, the Children's Special Service Mission, and other organisations and individuals conduct services at the seaside, and their common object is that of witness and decision. The Sand Services conducted by the former body here described, are doubtless indicative of the work carried on generally by other organisations.

THE KENT COAST SAND SERVICES

The N.S.S.U. Evangelist, Rev. Newton Jones, commenced these services thirty-four years ago at Margate, and services are now held under the N.S.S.U. banner every August at Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs, Tankerton, Birchington and Herne Bay.

The general plan is to arrange for a short swim

in the early morning for those youngsters who care for it, to hold an hour's Gospel service from 11 a.m. to 12 noon, and to spend the afternoons in rambles, games, picnics, and studies. While the work is essentially for the boys and girls, adults are not overlooked, and special arrangements are made for Sunday School workers.

Each centre has a leader and an assistant, is provided with a tent or bungalow, a piano or harmonium, medals for prizes, hymn sheets and sports outfit. The spiritual results have always been satisfactory, and a review of hundreds of letters from adolescents has revealed the power of this form of Christian service. The games and rambles are adjuncts so arranged as to give the workers opportunities to talk personally with the young people about the "Great Adventure."

It has been possible at each centre to secure the services of volunteers to assist the leaders, and the whole work is planned to the smallest detail months ahead by the Superintendent.

The Sports side is organised as a separate department on account of the size of the work, and one minister superintends all the heats and finals. A challenge trophy is presented to the winning team as well as individual medals.

The leaders exchange "pulpits," and a few "free lances" assist at the various centres. Special picnics at which addresses to Christian workers are given are arranged each week, and for this purpose the six centres meet at two separate places. This work is also organised as a separate department, and is in the hands of a minister.

Arrangements are being made this year for a choral competition, and it may be that this will constitute a similar separate organisation.

The Gospel Services are varied, and include Sand Text Competitions, Museum Services, Harvest Festivals, Temperance Lectures, and it is not difficult to attract large crowds. The boys and girls are registered, and punctual and regular attendance rewarded. Parents in general do not object to their children attending the services, and many children have been the means of bringing their parents.

The appeal thus made to the modern boy and girl is almost irresistible, and one finds an enthusiasm at all the centres sufficient to testify to the appreciation of the work.

SAND SERVICE EXTENSION

It has been possible to train ministerial students for the Sand Services, and as a result help has been given to local Sunday School Unions who desired to engage in this class of work. After all, the personality and equipment of the leader for this and any form of outdoor Christian service is of vital importance.

At Swansea, very successful services have been organised on the above lines, and the finances have been met. Local friends at Southport have carried on work inaugurated there by the Superintendent of the Kent Coast Sand Services.

SAND SERVICE FINANCE

The National Union has been able to free the services of its Evangelist in the summer for Sand Service work, and the cost of central administration apart from this is practically *nil.* Each leader and assistant receives a small *honorarium* and travelling expenses, and apart from this item there is no great expense. The Superintendent is able to secure donations which normally cover the expenses. Each centre incurs small expenses and secures contributions, but collections are usually forbidden by the authorities, and, so far, no centre on the Kent Coast can be regarded as self-supporting.

The cost, however, is not heavy, and it is not essential to organise everything on the Kent Coast lines. As an attractive form of Special Missions for children there is very much to be said for the Sand Services, and there should be an extension of the movement as soon as this fact is appreciated.

Chapter XI

THE CONDUCT OF CHILDREN'S MEETINGS

D. P. THOMSON, M.A.

In a previous chapter the conviction was expressed that the vindication or condemnation of the evangelistic meeting for children as a method of approach to young life on the part of the Church was more a matter of men and methods than of anything else. The writer wishes to emphasise that point. It cannot be too strongly urged that the Missioner who succeeds in commending himself and his work to the ministers and teachers with whom he co-operates in winning the young life of the country for Christ, is worthy of official recognition and of a definite place in our Christian educational programme. Guided by wise hands, and conducted on sane lines, meetings such as we are discussing may be productive of untold good, and will certainly result in blessing out of all proportion to the thought and energy expended. Led by the type of man whose line of approach and method of appeal are alike psychologically unsound and spiritually valueless, they are almost certain to result in greater damage to growing minds and hearts than can easily be realised. Humanly speaking everything depends on the Missioner.

In his suggestive book on Religious Psychology, to

which reference has already been made,* Dr. Bruce discusses the qualifications of the ideal Children's Evangelist. "He must be a man specially endowed and fitted for the work. Such endowments are rare indeed. It needs a mind that delights in the pictorial; an imagination that can seize the children's standpoint, can construe the world to the childish view, can view all truth with the young eye, and see its bearings on young life, on play, on lessons, on companions and parents, on brothers and sisters. Few have got this wondrous faculty. But the man or woman that has it is the invaluable missioner to children. Further, illustrations must be sought and found in all sides of child life. The Missioner must excel in the number of side-lights which he can throw upon the great truth which he elucidates. He must be apt in telling stories, and they must be such as children thoroughly understand, and such as do not sidetrack the truth."

This is not by any means a complete picture, and, as Dr. Bruce remarks, here as elsewhere, the ideal is all too rarely found. What then, we must ask, are the indispensable qualifications for one who would undertake this work?

The children's evangelist must needs be a man (or woman) of winning personality, with something of that fine combination of strength and tenderness for which the young people of both sexes will insensibly look. A well-developed imaginative faculty must be supplemented by sufficient critical and constructive powers to

* *The Psychology of Christian Life and Behaviour,* by W. S. Bruce, D.D.

ensure the salient facts of Child Psychology being adequately handled and related to the needs of the work. The Missioner must know the child-mind, with its limited horizons and undeveloped powers, its innate fondness for the pictorial and the concrete, and its complete inability to appreciate the abstract; the child heart with its wonderful capacity for loyalty and affection, for high resolve and generous self-sacrifice; the child-soul, so singularly sensitive to the promptings of the unseen, so filled with vague aspirations and longings, and visited so often by strange disquiets. He must have not merely a very real background of personal spiritual experience, but some grounding in practical work among both boys and girls both inside and outside the walls of the Sunday School and the Church. Above all, there must be that humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, without which no vital work for the Kingdom of God can be done.

Next in importance to the personality of the speaker, are the methods adopted in the conduct of the meetings, and the form in which the message is delivered to the children. There are many different types of meetings embraced within the scope of our discussion, and it will perhaps be well to begin with a consideration of the Special Mission, or series of meetings, so ably introduced by Mr. Burgess in the previous chapter. The suggestions advanced in this connection will prove more generally applicable than such limitation of our subject would seem to suggest, and the questions presenting themselves for answer will raise implications involving the whole field of evangelistic work among children.

What holds good of the meeting that forms one of a series, will be found to hold good in many points of the single meeting as well.

The first question that presents itself in connection with the planning of an evangelistic campaign concerns the nature and extent of the constituency to which the appeal is to be addressed. That question comes with peculiar force in the case of a Young People's Mission. Are the meetings to be strictly confined to children, or should they be thrown open to all? Is the Missioner to aim at a specialised audience consisting entirely of young people under 14 or 15, or at a family gathering to which fathers and mothers will come accompanied by their children? Difference of opinion exists on this point, and probably there is room for it. There is much to be said on both sides. The open meeting with its appeal specially addressed to children gives the Missioner a unique opportunity of getting the ear and gaining the interest of men and women who would not readily attend any other kind of evangelistic meeting. Parents come with their children, the importunity of the boys and girls who have been gripped on the opening nights of the Mission being such that mothers, and even fathers, find it difficult to resist their appeal. On the other hand, where the meeting is confined to children, (except for the monitors or workers whose presence may be considered necessary for the purpose of keeping order,) the speaker has it in his power to specialise the message in a way that it is not easy to do otherwise. Experience has shown that the latter type of meeting is much more difficult to handle, especially when the numbers are large, and the Young

People's Evangelists of the Scottish Churches, with whose work the writer is familiar, have generally adopted the other method. Doubtless they feel not only that the opportunity of reaching the parents is too good to be lost, but that their very presence in the meetings makes for increased interest and impressiveness so far as the children are concerned. While practically and experimentally this type of meeting may have much to commend it in the eyes of many, from the all-important point of view of adaptation of the message to the child-mind *Graded Evangelism* is undoubtedly the ideal.

With graded methods in the Sunday School most of us are now familiar, and the Primary, Junior and Intermediate Departments at least, are prominent features of our religious educational system. If the premises on which such division rests are sound, then, as a logical development from this, some form of grading in Evangelistic work must inevitably follow. In America, perhaps more than in our own country, the principle of adaptation has already come to be observed in some quarters as applicable to young people's evangelism, particularly through the medium of the Sunday School. "We assume," says Mr. Frank L. Brown, in a recent book on this subject,* "that the character of the appeal for the Christian decision of the scholars should be graded. Different motives, experience and knowledge are found at each stage of development, and these must be taken into account if we do not wish to develop some cases of stunted growth or arrested development"—and, we might add, if we wish to

* *Plans for Sunday School Evangelism,* by Frank L. Brown.

avoid that bane of all young people's work, spiritual precocity! It is surely unreasonable to expect the same evangelistic address and appeal to do justice to the child of 6 or 8 and the boy or girl bordering on the teens. "Each age," we need to be reminded, "has its own characteristics spiritually as well as intellectually, and what is good and necessary for one period of development may be positively harmful for another." These considerations must guide us in all our work.

But, it may be asked, granting its desirability, is Graded Evangelism practicable? And the answer is, that it depends altogether on the amount of trouble we are willing to take, and the amount of time we are prepared to spend in making the necessary arrangements. The writer has experimented with the graded method in adolescent evangelism, and has followed with interest the experiments that others have been making in the same field. In the future he hopes to test the principle more thoroughly, but enough information has already been gathered abundantly to demonstrate not only the practicability but the wisdom of this method. What has been—and is being—done successfully among adolescents, could be carried out even more effectively among children, the difference between the early and later stages of adolescence being hardly as great as between the Primary and Intermediate child.

When the preliminary problem of the range of appeal to be aimed at and the type of meeting to be adopted has been solved, the children's evangelist discovers his next task to be that of finding an effective point of contact with his youthful constituency. The probability is that he will decide to use either the lan-

tern or the blackboard as a means of attracting attention and gaining interest, and if his Chalk Talks, Song Services, or Lantern Addresses have been well intimated and advertised beforehand he may reasonably expect to find a considerable audience gathered on the opening night. If his Mission begins on a Sunday he will have the opportunity of addressing the forenoon congregation and of speaking to the Sunday School later in the day. So far as the children of the congregation are concerned, everything will depend on the kind of impression he makes there. But there remain the children who are to be found neither in Church nor in Sunday School, and for whom minister and missioner alike must feel no little concern. How are they to be reached? Judiciously worded advertisements and attractively drawn-up cards of invitation may do much, but a personal visit to the Day School will do far more. It will provide the missioner with an opportunity of impressing his personality and message on those very children who are most difficult to reach, and it may very well win for him the sympathy of the teachers. Permission to pay such a visit is generally readily granted to an accredited worker, the Bible Hour being placed at his disposal on one or more days. The writer has had the experience of being invited to use that hour morning by morning during his stay in a town, and has found it an invaluable opening. The outcome of such a visit will very largely depend on the missioner's personality and gifts, and on his power of attracting and interesting the children.

In his Summer Caravan Work among the villages, Mr. Pratt, the artist evangelist of the United Free

Church of Scotland, makes a habit of visiting the local school as early as possible during a Mission. Armed with a fresh canvas and his brush and colours, he finds his way to the school-room on the Tuesday or Wednesday morning and entertains the fascinated children for the best part of an hour with a homely talk or story, illustrated by a painting done before their wondering and admiring eyes. Only an artist of Mr. Pratt's gifts could do this with success, but in his hands it becomes a most effective and telling method of approach and appeal, and long before the hour is over the studied indifference or thinly veiled antagonism of many a teacher is broken down, resulting in a pressing invitation to return the following day, and perhaps in a visit to the caravan, or a heart to heart talk in the quiet of the school-room parlour on the biggest things of life. What Mr. Pratt accomplishes in his own unique way, others may succeed in effecting by means of a blackboard talk or an object lesson address, or even in the case of those not so gifted, by the medium of speech alone.

The lantern and the blackboard are very largely used in evangelistic meetings for children, some workers preferring the one and some the other. The blackboard demands special gifts, and even if the speaker be an adept at the work it should be prepared beforehand. The curiosity of the children is roused by the presence of the draped or paper covered board, and their interest is secured from the start. Bit by bit, as the address proceeds, the coverings are removed until the whole series of pictures stands revealed with its dual appeal to eye and ear. As an alternative to the blackboard

the lantern may be used, but the pictures must be good ones and the interest must be sustained by a sufficiently large series of slides. Some children's evangelists lecture through "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Last Week of Christ's Life," in the course of a Mission, and the latter especially can be done with great power and effect. The Pilgrim may create more amusement, but the presentation of the suffering Saviour will appeal to all that is deepest in the mind and heart of the child, and in the hands of one who is careful not to harrow the feelings of the little ones either by his manner or message, or by the pictures he shows, such a series may accomplish much.

There are speakers to children who essay the work of a week or fortnight's indoor meetings without the aid of either the screen or the blackboard, but for the average man the wisdom of such a course is distinctly doubtful. Even with the use of object lessons and concrete illustrations of one kind or another, or with the exercise of a highly developed imaginative and descriptive faculty in the telling of stories, it is difficult to hold large audiences of young people night by night, especially in the more populous centres where counter attractions are so many.

Music will have a large place in the programme of children's meetings, and the evangelist will do well to choose his hymns with care. Hymns of inner experience and yearning that belong to a much later stage in life, or of pious aspiration for the rest and seclusion of heaven, will be studiously avoided, and hymns with a strong doctrinal background may well be omitted from the selection. Most of our modern collections in-

clude a sufficient number of active, virile, picturesque hymns, eminently suited to the eager and restless spirit of youth, to afford abundant variety of choice. If hymn sheets are used—and they have their place—a judiciously graded selection can be made, but on the whole there is much to be said for the use of a large roll prominently displayed on the blackboard, the words being printed in type sufficiently large for all to see. In the case of a lantern service the screen will, of course, be employed. This method lends variety and interest to the meetings, and helps to concentrate the attention of the children on the speaker. If solos are rendered they should be wisely chosen and should always have a chorus in which the children can join. The Mission affords a splendid opportunity for teaching new choruses to the children, and this should be utilised to the full. Boys and girls are fond of singing, and truth will often wing its way home in the words of a hymn, not only to their own hearts but, later, to those of their parents. Care must be taken to see the words of the choruses are simple, easily understood, and adapted to the child's life and outlook. Their background of thought and appeal should be ethical rather than doctrinal. There is a world of difference between the types represented by the following examples, which are selected from two very different collections compiled for children's meetings:

(1) "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,
To shine for Him each day,
In every way to try to please Him
At home, at school, at play."

(2) "I come third, I come third,
Where God puts one in His Word,
God comes first, my neighbours second
I come third."

(3) "Nothing to pay, there's nothing to pay,
Straight is the gate, and narrow the way.
Book on the up line, start off to-day,
Glasgow to Glory, there's nothing to pay."

(4) "My sins were as high as a mountain,
They all disappeared in the fountain,
He wrote my name down for a palace and crown,
And now, praise His dear Name, I am free."

The two former contain eminently suitable messages for boys and girls, the two latter embody metaphors quite beyond their grasp, and are in the last degree unsuitable.

The conduct of the meeting should, generally speaking, be in the hands of the missioner or speaker; but the minister, if present, should be invited to take part, and on no account must the impression be conveyed that he is being relegated to the background. The spirit of reverence must be explicit throughout the meeting, conveyed rather by the whole attitude of the speaker than by any formal appeal or admonition, and the sense of reality must pervade the atmosphere if young minds are not to be alienated. There is perhaps nothing children hate so much as artificiality.

Alike in his manner and message, the evangelist must realise that he is dealing with the most delicate and impressionable material. He is an artist working on the

sensitive canvas of young life, and no touch of his brush can ever be altogether erased. He is a sculptor fashioning young souls according to the ideals and standards of Christ, and every stroke of the mallet counts. He is an ambassador—the representative of his Lord and Master—and his every action and word will be watched and weighed by extremely critical eyes and minds. On the way in which he presents Jesus Christ to these young lives more than he can ever know will depend.

The observations one has to make about the message itself must necessarily be somewhat general, but they need be none the less valuable on that account. The background of the Missioner's appeal must be the inalienable right of every child to a place in the Kingdom of God, to his share of the Heavenly Father's love and care, and to the enjoyment of all the privileges of Christian inheritance and fellowship in virtue of his birth into a redeemed world. If the young heart is conscious of sin in word or thought or deed, if privilege is felt to have been forfeited, wrong decisions to have been taken and joy lost, then the tender forgiving love of Jesus must be presented; and the willingness and power of the Saviour, not only to pardon and restore, but to impart His strength alike for the hour of temptation and of opportunity, and guidance for the whole of life, must be made clear. But at all costs care must be taken to avoid creating the impression that life is generated and cradled in sin and shadowed by guilt and condemnation from its very entrance into the world, and that *only* by the way of repentance and cleansing—by heartfelt conviction and catastrophic conversion—can young or

old come into the Kingdom. Such teaching is altogether alien to the spirit of the New Testament and does violence not only to the character of our Lord, but to the sensitive mind of the child.

The evangelist who gets to know his audience will find many strange ideas and misconceptions in the minds of the children, and these he must do his best to remove. He will come across boys and girls who have been led to regard God as a sort of glorified detective, ever on the watch to observe a fall, and quick to punish the slightest lapse from rectitude. He will commonly meet with children who think of religion as something unnatural and strange, far removed from daily life and thought, and burdensome in the meaningless petty restrictions it imposes—necessary, perhaps, to take one to heaven, but little good for anything else. Patiently, lovingly—even humorously—he must set himself to break down prejudices and remove misunderstandings. He must avoid a doctrinal or dogmatic statement of Christianity totally unsuited to minds that have not reached the stage of conceptual thought, however necessary such credal statement may be for the fully developed intelligence. It is worse than useless for him "to cloud the child's apprehension of Jesus by an attempt to explain His two-fold nature," or to introduce him to the God of the catechism, or to the substitutionary theories of the theologian. In presenting the Christ of history and of experience to the child-mind he must beware of leaving the impression that Jesus is little more than a Hero to be admired, or a great Teacher and Wonder Worker. He must set forth Christ as both Saviour and Lord—as Master

and Friend. Above all he must make it clear beyond question that religion is a matter of everyday life and conduct, affecting all one's relations, inspiring and quickening mind and body and making for a full and rounded life—healthy, helpful and happy. He must reveal it as "determining the quality of work one does at school, the kind of game one plays, the sort of friend one proves."

It cannot be gainsaid that the message of Christ has been too often connected in the minds of the children with certain duties performed on Sundays, with distant rewards and punishments in a faraway heaven or hell, with certain denials and restraints, and with much that makes life irksome and unhappy. The idea has never dawned on many of their minds that to be a Christian is to enter on a life at once sweeter, happier and more wholesome, that it is not merely to gain the favour of God and enjoy the blessings of salvation, but to dedicate the whole life, with its expanding powers of mind and body, to the service and Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and to the help and redemption of one's fellows. It is this last interpretation that appeals to the boy or girl entering on the adolescent stage. The sense of something big enough to demand all they are and have, and the knowledge of One Who is worthy of all their devotion and service—their passionate attachment and generous self-sacrifice—will make a tremendous appeal to boys and girls just entering their teens.

What response to his message and appeal is the children's evangelist to look for, and how is he to garner his harvest? Here, perhaps even more than anywhere

else, tact and self-restraint, psychological knowledge and spiritual insight, and above all, sound practical common-sense, are called for. Here golden opportunities may be lost, and here too good work may be sadly marred.

Should there be an after meeting—and, if so, what form should it take? Should there be an appeal for immediate decision, and an opportunity for open confession of Christ? These are momentous questions, and the answers will largely depend upon place and circumstances, and on the type of man who is acting as leader or speaker.

A strong case can be made out for the after-meeting, especially if it takes the form of an Instruction Class (or Classes), with the ages carefully graded, and tendency to emotionalism or undue suggestibility guarded against. There ought certainly to be some opportunity given for personal conference with the Missioner, but it is more than doubtful whether any pressing appeal for immediate decision should be made (even in the after-meeting) unless one is dealing with adults, or adolescents beyond the age of 16. Any segregation of children into those who have decided and those who have not, or any intimation—or even suggestion—that those who do not respond to the appeal are thus guilty of rejecting Christ and refusing the Christian life, must be avoided. "To permit this," says Mr. Frank L. Brown, in discussing Graded Evangelism in the Sunday School, "is the surest method of causing such a rejection on the one hand, and of producing insincerity on the other. The sense of personal responsibility to God is necessary to intelligent conviction and decision,

and this sense does not normally develop in strength till the end of the Junior period and the beginning of Adolescence.

"If, after the address," suggests Rev. Lionel B. Fletcher, in an admirable chapter on "Evangelistic Work Among the Young," in his recent book on Evangelism,* "the speaker will make it clear that he will be in an adjoining room when the meeting closes and will be glad to meet those who want to begin as young soldiers of Christ, children will be saved from any injurious element which might attach itself to an unintelligent movement to the front of the church." There is sound practical wisdom in that suggestion, but perhaps the best method of all is that adopted by Messrs. Grieve and Pratt, the Young People's Evangelists of the United Free Church of Scotland (and doubtless by others who share their convictions). These workers combine Instruction Classes for adolescents and adults with ample opportunity for interviews with old and young alike, and with the provision of a Letter Box into which communications of all kinds can be put.

This Letter Box is made of stout cardboard and is displayed in a prominent position near the door of the church or hall. Its presence and purpose are duly intimated, and into it boys and girls are invited to drop letters expressing their appreciation of the meetings, voicing any questions they may have, and telling of blessing received. A special invitation is given to them to send in paintings of the illustrations they have seen on the blackboard, the easel or the screen. This is done with the double purpose of impressing the message on

* *The Effective Evangelist,* by Lionel B. Fletcher.

the children's minds and awakening the interest of their parents. In this way too, the Missioner gathers invaluable information as to the kind of impression the children are carrying away from the meetings.

The Letter Box proves a most popular and valuable adjunct to the work, often bringing hundreds of communications to the evangelist during a single fortnight's effort. These come from people of all ages and classes. Adults write asking for interviews, and shy but hungry souls reveal their longing for the Bread of Life. Boys and girls write to tell how they are getting on at school —of their homes and holiday experiences, their little joys and sorrows, of what they have found most interesting and helpful in the meetings, and, best of all, of hearts and lives given to the Saviour. The writer has had the privilege of examining much of this correspondence and is convinced that most effective use could be made of this method in all types of evangelistic services and meetings.

Almost equally as important as the mode of appeal is the question of "following up" the Mission. Here, minister and missioner should consult with one another as to the best means of conserving the fruits of the meetings, and of leading the boys and girls whose hearts have been touched by the Saviour into a strong and vigorous Christian discipleship. If the work is to be consolidated something must be done, and done at once, to insure the permanence of impressions made, and to relate the new interests and enthusiasms created to life in the home, the school and the church. It is just at this point that so much self-sacrificing and successful work has been vitiated in the past. The Church

that makes no serious attempt to provide for the continuance and completion of the work of the Mission will deservedly lose most of its fruits.

There are many other types of evangelistic meetings for children than these that have been mentioned here. There is the Seaside Meeting of which Mr. Burgess has written; there is Decision Day in the Sunday School with which Mr. Hayes has dealt so suggestively, and, among others, there is the informal type of meeting so dear to the heart of a boy, for which I would like to put in a plea in closing.

The late headmaster of the Leys School, Cambridge, pleads in one of his books * for meetings for public school boys held outside the chapel, on the ground that greater informality is possible, and that "illustrations of a homely and even humorous type can be used which would be barred in school chapel by the boys' sense of the fitting no less than by the masters'." In his description of this kind of meeting these significant sentences occur, "Some of the most profitable of such meetings have been held when the number attending has made it necessary for them to sit all over the floor. . . . There is a value in so treating the affairs of the soul that they may be seen to be not incongruous with happy and wholesome laughter."

The signal success in reaching and winning boys which has attended the summer camps and seaside missions—and many of the winter meetings—of the Children's Special Service Mission, is to be traced in no small measure to the recognition of this truth—that your normal healthy boy is more at home in such a

* *The Unfolding Life,* by W. T. A. Barber.

gathering than in a formal meeting, and that a homely talk to a crowd of fellows, squatting at their ease on the floor of some suitable room or small hall—a talk instinct with genuine humour, and lit up by personal experience—may do far more to solve the problem of winning the boy than any number of evangelistic meetings of the more conventional type.

Chapter XII

THE FRUITS OF EVANGELISTIC WORK AMONG CHILDREN

ONE OF THE EDITORS *

In a chapter such as this it is necessary that our terms should be defined with some degree of accuracy. If our survey is to have any scientific or spiritual value whatever its limits must be clearly indicated. How wide a connotation are we prepared to give to the term child? What exactly do we mean by evangelistic work among children? On what basis do we intend to estimate the fruits of such work? These questions are fundamental to our study and must be answered forthwith. It would largely nullify the value of our investigations to take for granted that the reader is already satisfied in his own mind as to the interpretation likely to be put on these terms here.

In Chapter V Dr. Mark divides the pre-adolescent period of life into three stages—infancy, childhood, and boyhood or girlhood—that covered by the term *child* being from six to nine years of age. Such a classification is not without its value for the purpose he has in view, but no such limitation of childhood years can be accepted for this chapter. Here we are

* My colleague prefers that I should take full responsibility for this chapter.

to regard and speak of as children all who have reached the stage of self-consciousness, and are under twelve or thirteen years of age. The scope allowed by such a definition is a fairly wide one, but nothing less would be consistent with the purpose or spirit of this book.

In discussing the results of evangelistic work among children we have no thought of confining our attention to Special Missions, or even to religious meetings with a definitely evangelistic aim. Our concern is with the whole work of the Home, the Sunday School and the Church, in leading boys and girls to Christ, in bringing them to a life decision, and to the consciousness of personal relationship with God.

It is when we come to discuss the fruits of this work that the need for definition becomes most pressing. How are we to judge of the presence of a vital work of the Spirit of God in the hearts and lives of boys and girls? By what standard are we to gauge their profession? For what manifestations of spiritual experience are we to look? To what evidences of character and conduct, of speech and behaviour, are we to direct our attention? And, above all, at what point in the spiritual development of the unfolding life can we say with confidence that any change observable gives promise of permanence?

Very different answers to these questions will be given by Christian men and women to-day than would have been offered forty or fifty years ago. The application of the category of evolution to the whole of the developing life, and the recognition that the individual largely lives through the early experiences of the race

in childhood—manifesting their characteristics, and revealing their attitude of mind, their interests and ambitions, and even, perhaps, their religious conceptions—have altered our whole outlook on the question of what is normal and natural for childhood. Above all they have led us to guard against such artificial types of piety as used to be held up as the standard for growing boys and girls.

Just how far we have advanced in this direction becomes apparent when we turn to study the writings of the leaders of the Evangelical Movement of the 18th, and even the early 19th, century. Then the child was expected to pass through exactly the same experience, and to manifest the same interests, as the adult. Conceived in sin, depraved in mind and heart, guilty and condemned from earliest years in the sight of an angry God, he must experience the agony of conviction and remorse, be visited by darkness and doubt, and finally arrive at conversion and confession. The new life on which he then entered was expected to manifest itself in long prayers, religious meditation, the use of pious phraseology, and a grave concern for the welfare of the human race. "Too often," says one writer, "in the good books written for the young was the pious child a hectic unnatural creature whom we foredoomed to an early death."

Even so great a man as John Wesley was dominated by this conception, and lent the weight of his authority to these ideas. One has only to read his *Journals* to see this, and to become aware of the gulf that separates his age and standpoint from ours. Here are some of the cases he quotes with evident approval. (We quote

from Dr. Barber's book "The Unfolding of Life," which will be found most suggestive at this point.)

"A child three years old was given much to praying aloud to God. He called to his companion, 'Polly, we must pray. Leave your doll. Let us kneel down.' He died in peace a year or two later."

"Richard Hutchinson, four years old, began much to talk of God. From that time he never played nor laughed, but was as serious as one of three-score. He constantly reproved any that cursed or swore or spoke indecently in his hearing, and frequently mourned over his brother, who was two or three years older, saying, 'I fear my brother will go to hell for he does not love God.' He died of small-pox, saying, 'I will go home, now I will go to my Father.' "

"Again, a child who died at two and a half spoke exceedingly plain, but very seldom, and then only a few words. She could not bear any to behave in a light or unseemly manner. If any offered to kiss or touch her she said, 'I do not like you.' If her brothers or sisters spoke angrily or behaved triflingly, she sharply reproved them or tenderly exhorted them. If she spoke too sharply she humbled herself, not content until she was forgiven. She was especially fond of hearing and singing the hymn, 'Abba, Father, hear my cry.' "

Having adopted the maxim of his Moravian friends that "If a boy play when he is a boy, he will play when he is a man," Wesley strove to keep the boys in his Kingwood School from games of all kinds.

It has to be admitted that there are still with us not a few who share Wesley's point of view, and who would regard the type of youthful piety embodied in these

illustrations as altogether admirable and desirable—who would, in fact, be distinctly inclined to doubt the value of any other type. Their ideal of a "soundly converted" boy has not inaptly been described as "A little old man, ostensibly carrying about his Bible, attending prayer meetings more than playing fields, cultivating a grave face, developing a faculty for quoting texts and relating experiences." In short—a precocious little theologian, and in no sense a child disciple!

What wise parents and teachers—and in fact educated Christian men and women everywhere, who have faced these problems—look for to-day is something very different from this. It is the simple, childlike consciousness of personal relationship with Christ—the deepening realisation of what Divine worship means, and the desire to love, serve and obey the Saviour in a natural childlike way. It is further the realisation of His interest and help in all the concerns of childhood, and the knowledge that happy and healthful games and wholesome fun are as much to His mind as to theirs. The girl who loves Christ is no longer expected to become a woman before her time, but a purer, sweeter and more lovable girl. And the boys, while becoming in every way better and brighter, are expected to remain boys, and not to become men all at once!

There is however one very real danger against which we must guard. A healthy reaction from older and cruder views of the religious experience natural to childhood must not be allowed to carry us too far. There is at the present time an unfortunate tendency to disparage anything in the nature of vital religious experience in the pre-adolescent period, and to regard as

purely ephemeral any fruits of evangelistic work among children.

The dangers that lurk in such a conception have been indicated in previous chapters, while the lack of spiritual insight, and even of truly scientific thinking, which such an attitude of mind reveals requires little demonstration. Abundant evidence has been gathered in recent years in the field of Religious Psychology to show that a very large number of Christian people date the decisive and determining experiences of their spiritual life to the years of childhood, and to substantiate the claim by Starbuck that while conversions appear to attain their maximum at 16 years of age, they begin as early as 7 or 8, increasing gradually in number till 10 or 11, and then falling away again for a period. Whether "conversion" is the right word to use for pre-adolescent experience may be open to question, but the facts implied in that statement cannot easily be gainsaid.

As to the apparent transitoriness of the religious impressions and experiences of childhood, the testimony of Horace Bushnell is well worth bearing in mind. The author of *Christian Nurture* is not likely to be accused of a bias in favour of evangelism, so that his words may be the more impressive. Speaking of children who have manifested some sign of spiritual experience in early years, Bushnell says, "Perhaps they will go through a rough mental struggle at some future day and seem to others and themselves there to have entered on a Christian life. And yet it may be true that there was still some root of right principle established in their childhood, which is here only quickened and developed, as when Christians of a mature age are

revived in their piety after a period of spiritual lethargy, for it is conceivable that regenerate character may exist before it is fully and firmly developed." The fact that there is, in many cases, something resembling a reconversion in the transition from the simple naïve religion of childhood to that of the larger world of adolescence, and finally to the full religious self-consciousness of the adult man or woman, must not be taken as discrediting in any way the earlier spiritual experiences.

What sources of information are open to us for such a study as we have in mind in this chapter? What lines of evidence may be regarded as admissible for our purpose? To what quarters can we look for reliable data on which to base our conclusions?

Three sources of information suggest themselves as at once valid and valuable. There is first of all the evidence of children themselves as to the difference Christ has made in their lives, and the reality of the new experience on which they have entered; there is further the testimony of adults as to the spiritual decision and determining influences of their own childhood days, and there is, finally, the evidence of onlookers—whether parents, teachers or ministers—as to the impressions made on their minds by close contact with children who have been the subject of deep religious experience.

The evidence of children themselves must be regarded as having a value all its own. However we may interpret their testimony the fact remains that they alone can speak with intimate personal knowledge on the subject, and have therefore a title to be heard. From their letters and conversation a great deal of information

may be gathered as to the reality and depth of their convictions, and the way in which they regard their relationship to Christ.

Some of these letters reveal a tendency to just these types of piety which we have been led to deprecate.

The boy who writes, "I used to be a slave of Satan, but with Jesus on my side I will be able to enter the Door and be under the blood of the Lamb. I will try to be good after this and perhaps Jesus will let me enter His Kingdom" has got somewhat mixed in his ideas, and is evidently suffering from a surfeit of incompletely digested theological teaching. Just how far he has got in personal experience is hard to say.

The child whose assurance that—"There is nothing that can give peace of mind to the sinner but the blood that was shed on Calvary"—is quoted approvingly by the Missioner, is to be pitied rather than blamed for a precocity that may very well develop into priggishness.

Some of the testimonies are good as far as they go, but suggest either that the presentation of Christ to the child mind has not been adequate, or that it has not been made sufficiently clear, as when a number of children write that they "intend to follow the Great Captain" and a boy assures the Missioner that "Jesus is the best Scoutmaster," and that he will not be ashamed to own himself a member of His troop. These ideas are good up to a point, but they hardly go far enough, and they suggest the possibility of early disappointment on both sides, unless the decision made is related to a fuller content of experience. Some are altogether delightful, a few of these being appended to show their simplicity and childlikeness.

"Only a few lines," writes one, "to let you know by your aid I have fallen in love with Jesus."

"I always thought I loved Christ," a girl confesses, "but when I saw Him being beaten on the tree for our sake, it was then true love entered my heart."

"I am writing this little letter," says another, "telling you that I have Jesus in my heart, and I will not let Him out!"

"From the many pictures you have shown me," writes a boy who has evidently been thinking deeply, "I have decided to be on the side of Christ."

"I have belonged to Jesus a few years now," one writes; and the testimony of another is still more significant and striking. It is that of a girl of 12 who writes,—

"I gave my heart to Jesus when I first learned to pray. That was when I was two!"

Most touching of all are the cases in which a father or mother is implicated.

"Last Friday evening," writes one girl, "Mummy and I made up our minds to trust Jesus. She is to help me, and she says I am to help her."

Surely such a letter as this holds out great promise for the future! Before we pass to speak of the testimony of adults as to the permanence of their early religious experiences and decisions, it may be well to append a few notes on the testimony of children from one whose wide experience and brilliant scholarship give him the right to speak.

"It is natural," says Dr. W. T. A. Barber,* "that the child's religion should be expressed in anthropo-

* *The Unfolding of Life,* by W. T. A. Barber.

morphic terms, his heaven in terms of earth. That simply means that he recognises no divorce between the two. . . . Along with the idealism which accepts the unseen, sees angels in the sky and in the garden alike, talks to Jesus as if He still has a knee for children to climb on, there is a sturdy sense of the practical which judges justly between good and bad. The child, like the grown-up world, does not believe in a faith which is not shown by works. Truth, unselfishness, good temper, self-control, lovingness, are recognised not merely as parts of obedience to a parent, but as in themselves good, and are quickly related to the Higher powers. The battle between good and evil is early recognised, the experience of defeat and conquest fully understood. The thought of Jesus as ready to help is quickly grasped, and the habit of prayer to Him is quite natural."

A second line of evidence suggested as admissible for our study is the testimony of adults as to the permanence of their early religious impressions. Nowhere perhaps, is this more striking than in the case of Ministers and Missionaries of the Church, suggesting that those who have come earliest to a personal knowledge of Christ, have also been foremost in the dedication of their lives to His service. Polycarp, the aged martyr of the Early Church, has left it on record that he became a follower of Christ at the age of 9. Matthew Henry gives the age of 10 as the date of his conversion. Isaac Watt assures us that he found the Saviour at 9, while Jonathan Edwards, the great master of the New England pulpit, dates the beginning of his Christian life back to the age of 7. Out of 71 corporate mem-

bers of the American Board of Missions, 19, according to Dr. Goodell, stated that they were converted at so early an age that they were unable to remember it, where 34 were led to Christ before they were 14. Twenty-five foreign missionaries, on furlough in this country, were discussing their work together when the conversation turned on the formative influence of the early years of life, Mr. Carey Bonner records, and it was found that 24 out of the 25 had dedicated themselves to their life work before the age of 14. What holds good of ministers and missionaries would seem to hold good also of distinguished servants of Christ in other fields. It was the unwavering testimony of the Great Lord Shaftesbury that he could unhesitatingly affirm that his spiritual life began at seven years of age, under the influence of his nurse, who had the joy of leading him to Christ.

These impressive facts could be multiplied almost indefinitely if space permitted and occasion required, and many a moving story could be told of what a childish decision came to mean in later life, and how far an early religious impression carried. The Editors of this book date the beginning of their own Christian discipleship to a memorable evening in childhood, when one was ten years of age and the other seven; and among their friends in University life and their colleagues in evangelistic work they number not a few who trace their decision for Christ back to quite as early a date.

In concluding this line of evidence, it may be well to give the testimony of one whose long and varied evangelistic and ministerial experience entitle him to be

heard. "The most surprising evidences of the permanent results of child conversion," says Rev. Lionel B. Fletcher, in a book to which reference has already been made,* "are to be seen in any meeting where those present who were converted under the age of 12 years are asked to hold up their hands. Generally the proportion is so astonishing that any sane man must wonder how it is that people will continue to theorise instead of acting on the evidence of their own eyesight."

Finally, we have the evidence of parents, teachers and ministers as to the worth and permanence of the work done among the young—evidence based on wide experience and intimate personal knowledge. Here, again, one or two examples will have to suffice, and if we select the ministerial testimonies in preference to the others it is because they are more comprehensive in their survey, and more immediately applicable to the purpose of this book. We select as examples, three very different types of men—C. H. Spurgeon, Dr. W. L. Watkinson and Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon—two of whom are still with us to substantiate what they have written, and to attest its up-to-dateness.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, on one occasion, made this remarkable statement—and whatever we may think of his theological views, his experience gives him the right to speak—"I will say broadly," averred the great Baptist preacher, "that I have more confidence in the spiritual life of the children that I have received into this Church than I have in the spiritual condition of the adults thus received. I will go even further than that. I have usually found a clearer knowledge of the

* *The Effective Evangelist,* by Lionel B. Fletcher.

Gospel, and a warmer love to Christ in the child convert than in the adult convert. I will even astonish you still more by saying that I have met with a deeper spiritual experience in children of 10 or 12 than I have in certain persons of 50 or 60."

Alongside that may be put the experiences of one of our foremost modern Congregationalist ministers, Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon of Stamford Hill, London. Some years ago Mr. Gibbon was led to hold a children's mission in his own church, and in a little book, *Drawing the Net, or Holding the Young for Christ,* he gives some account of the work together with the addresses he delivered. For three nights only special addresses were given to the young people, those who responded being gathered into instruction classes. At the close of these, all who desired to make public confession of Christ were asked to hand in their names. Over 70 did so, and were received into Church membership at the end of the year. "To-day," says Mr. Gibbon, writing in 1915, "they are among the most faithful, earnest and consistent members of the Church."

Dr. W. L. Watkinson, the veteran Methodist minister, is one of the most widely known preachers and writers in the Churches. This is his plea: "We instruct our children and seek to encourage them, but are surprised if they evidence anything like a religious experience. A child may not understand theology, but it can enjoy religion. Go to a child at once with a spiritual appeal and expect the spiritual effect. Do not think of their need of experience. Give them a chance, and you will be surprised to see the wonderful fruit they will bear."

The discussion in which we have been engaged in this chapter may be closed—and the whole book fitly concluded—with this admonition:—

"Where early motions of the religious life are found among children it becomes the whole object of religious education to keep them healthy, foster and train them to completeness and fulfilment." Only by this whole-hearted co-operation of the educationalist and the evangelist can we hope to succeed in our task of *Winning the Children for Christ.*

THE END

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